

P. o. angl. 249^t
(15.)

Muloch

COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. 807.

BREAD UPON THE WATERS.

IN ONE VOLUME.

COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. 807.

BREAD UPON THE WATERS.

IN ONE VOLUME.

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

By the same Author,

JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN	in 2 vols.
THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY	in 2 vols.
A LIFE FOR A LIFE	in 2 vols.
A WOMAN'S THOUGHTS ABOUT WOMEN	in 1 vol.
AGATHA'S HUSBAND	in 1 vol.
ROMANTIC TALES	in 1 vol.
DOMESTIC STORIES	in 1 vol.
MISTRESS AND MAID	in 1 vol.
THE OGILVIES	in 1 vol.
LORD ERLISTOUN	in 1 vol.
CHRISTIAN'S MISTAKE	in 1 vol.

BREAD UPON THE WATERS;

A FAMILY IN LOVE; A LOW MARRIAGE;

THE DOUBLE HOUSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

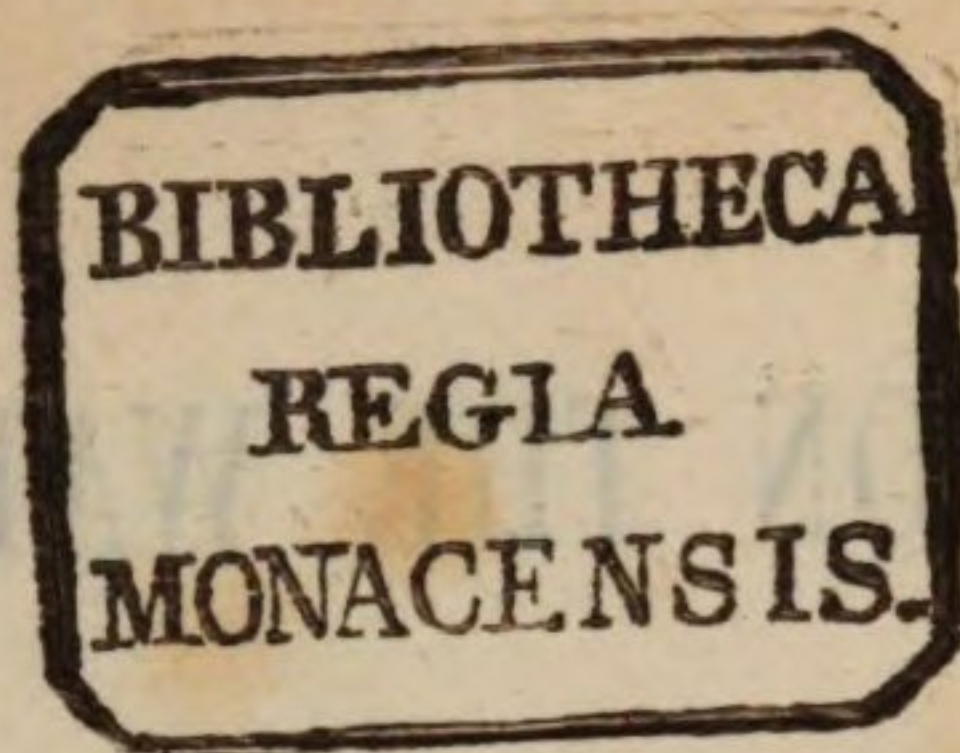
LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1865.

The Right of Translation is reserved.

183-PK.



BREAD UPON THE WATERS;

A

GOVERNESS'S LIFE.



READ THE WATER;

COLLEGE LIB.

Read the Water, etc.

INSCRIBED TO

A WOMAN,

THE DAILY RECORD OF WHOSE LIFE RESEMBLES THAT
OF HIM, WHOSE DIVINE STEPS SHE FOLLOWS, —
“WHO WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD.”

PREFACE.

This tale, which was written and published in 1852, for the benefit of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution,* is now republished here, in the hope that though reprinted abroad, it may still do some service to the excellent Charity at home.

THE AUTHOR.

Christmas 1865.

* See Appendix.

PREFACE.

This tale, which was written and published in 1852 for the benefit of the Government Dispensary Institution, is now republished here, in the hope that though repeated stories, it may still do some service to the excellent Charity at home.

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON 1862.

Printed by W. G. Smith.

BREAD UPON THE WATERS.

PART I.

It is to-day ten months since my mother died, and my father has told me that he is about to bring home another wife! — Another mistress of the household, another Mrs. Lyne, usurping *her* place, *her* name! How shall I ever bear it!

I do not think I share the usual prejudice against step-mothers. I know perfectly well, no daughter, even if grown up, can be to her father the comfort that a wife is; and many men, loving their first wives ever so dearly, have in time married again. My dear mother during her long illness several times hinted this to me, accidentally as it were, yet with meaning. But, in one sense, the parallel did not hold; for she was *not* "loved dearly;" — never, alas! since the first sunny year of her marriage, wherein I was born, and she, out of her deep happiness, called me *Felicia*.

I knew, I felt, that my father would marry again. These two months I have been trying to reason myself, ay, and my little brothers too, into some preparation for what must come in time. I even thought that we might learn to love his wife, — I and the two poor little fellows to whom the name of “father” has always been a name of fear — that is, if she were a good woman. But — *that* woman!

That woman, with the paint scarce wiped off her face, to come and lay her head on the sacred pillow where my mother died! — That woman, whose name has been for years the town’s talk, to bear the name which, sorrowful as her life was, my pure mother bore unsullied to her grave! It is hard, very hard! — nay, it is horrible!

Yet there is no alternative; they are already married — my father told me so. He has given me the choice, to prepare to welcome her here, or to go out myself into the wide cruel world — I think I would, except for those little ones, my brothers, to whom, since our mother died, I have tried to be mother and sister both. For their sakes I must have patience.

All day I have tried to exercise what, young and inexperienced as I am, my mother always said I had, — a clear judgment, a power of subduing

weak womanly emotions and prejudices, and seeing only *the right*. I think I see it now.

My father is perfectly free to marry, and to marry whom he pleases; no daughter can or ought to stand in the way of that. But oh! — if his wife had only been a good woman, nay, even an honest, respectable woman! His very housekeeper would have been preferable to —.

No; I will be just and merciful, as my poor mother was ever, to all sinners. This woman may not be so bad as the world paints her; for the world is **very** cruel, and a beautiful public singer must often be maligned. Even granting those things which cannot be contradicted, I have heard that kindness and generosity have ere now lingered even in the heart of a Magdalen.

I will not leave my home and my brothers, nor —

* * * * *

I was obliged to break off, and go down to our friend Mr. Redwood. I wonder if he saw that any thing was wrong with me, that I could not sing when he asked me. I wonder, too, does he know of what will happen in our family? and what will he think of it? Will he come here as usual, and will his mother? — To think of the Honourable

Mrs. Redwood visiting the woman my father has chosen for his second wife! Impossible!

Oh! I wish, I wish I could have told him — Mr. Redwood, I mean. But how could I, a mere girl, and he so young a man? Besides, I had no right; for he is still only a friend, or rather acquaintance. Only — sometimes I have thought — He said he was coming again next Wednesday; and I until this minute have forgotten that that is the very day my father told me they would come home, — he and — Mrs. Lyne; for I must teach myself to utter that dreaded word.

Ah me! ah, my poor little brothers! ah, my dear mother, my *own* mother, who knows not what we suffer, and to whom no suffering can ever come more! — For that, amidst all my weeping, I look up, and thank God!

They have come home, and I have seen my step-mother for the first time. She was very sweet and gracious, both to me and to the boys; and she is, oh! such a handsome woman! Dressed for the evening, she did not look above thirty. What a contrast to my poor sick mother, worn out before

her time! But I must not suffer myself to dwell on these things.

Mrs. Lyne entered the house with an easy grace, all smiles. She said it was a pretty house. I had taken pains to have all in order for her; for I wished to please my father, if I could. After the house, she took notice of us, shook hands with me and Henry, and would have kissed dear little Aleck, but he pouted and refused. She only laughed, and said "he was a pretty fellow nevertheless."

My heart was ready to burst, knowing how like the child is to his mother.

Nevertheless, both Henry and Aleck grew sociable with her towards the end of the evening; for she is so bewitching in her manners, and children of seven and ten are so easily impressible. My father showed at first a little embarrassment; but she soon talked all that away. I never knew a woman with such irresistible powers of conversation.

For myself, I think I behaved, as I had hoped and prayed I might behave, — with quiet self-control, rendering courtesy where courtesy was due. In this I was helped, and many of the discomforts of the evening smoothed down, by Mr. Redwood, who, not having received my message through his mother, appeared as he had at first promised. I

cannot tell if he had known or guessed the change in our family; but whether or not, he sustained his difficult position admirably well. For even at his age, he is at once a gentleman and a man of the world; though the world has not spoiled him.

I wonder if he thought my step-mother handsome! She talked to him a good deal, and he always answered with politeness; but it was evident he liked better to stay with the little boys and me. He played a game at draughts with Henry, and told Aleck a wonderful story about a hobgoblin; then he went away. As he shook my hand, I felt his eye upon me with such a kind, pitying look that I could hardly keep down my tears. Oh! he knows what I must suffer, — he has such a gentle heart!

Surely men cannot be all tyrants, all selfish! Surely — though my mother's sore experience at times taught me almost to doubt the fact — there must be in the world such a thing as a good husband and a happy marriage!

“All things are less dreadful than they seem.”

How truthfully that line of Wordsworth's rings in my ear to-night, when, having looked at my brothers asleep in their little beds, and seen that the house is all quiet and safe, — for it is not till to-morrow morning that I relinquish the keys to my

step-mother, — I have come up to my own room, to think over the events of the day before it closes.

Nevertheless, I am very glad that this dreaded evening is over.

Oh! mother, my mother, of whom is my last thought at night, whose example I desire and strive in all things to follow, — you see, O mother! how I try to do my duty, let what will be the end — even as you did, until God took you from my love unto His own!

It was Henry's birth-day to-day.

(Mem. inserted, as are several others, evidently of a much later date than the original diary.)

Henry was ten years old, I remember, and the finest little fellow imaginable, the pride of the whole Square. He was very tall and large made for his age; indeed, he used to torment me by stealing my slippers and gloves, pretending that they fitted him exactly, which indeed was a blessing, otherwise, he would have gone short enough, poor fellow! After the first three months of our father's marriage, Mrs. Lyne used to say that children were always wanting something.

Yet I dressed them very simply, my two boys — for I began to call them mine, seeing there was no one else to claim them. I could see them now, in their dark green blouses and leather belts, each with his books under his arm, just as they used to look turning the corner of our

Square, when coming home daily from school. They were such handsome boys!)

Henry's birth-day! — We always, in the worst of times, made birth-days pleasant days — but this has been very sad.

It began ill. At breakfast I reminded my father of the day, and hinted what he had long promised Henry as a birth-day present — a box of tools at Holtzapffel's in Charing Cross.

Mrs. Lyne lifted her eyebrows, and reasoned mildly about the "evil of extravagance."

Now, since she has brought into the house many luxuries, — expensive even to my father's large income, — I thought this not quite right; still I argued and entreated a little more; I knew how the boy longed for his birth-day present.

"Felicia," said my father, after his wife had talked with him apart, in her smooth low voice; "you spoil those boys too much. They should, as Mrs. Lyne says, be taught self-denial, not extravagance. I will have no more presents given them on any pretext whatever."

So Henry lost his delight. Heaven forgive me if my heart burned against my father; but I thought it very hard, especially as the case was only one out of many, in which that bland moralizing voice

had interfered between the children and their little pleasures.

Henry was indignant too, for he was of a high spirit, and had forced me to tell him the truth; — indeed I never can tell any thing else — all comes out of me sooner or later. And when, in honour of the day, he dined with us, he was not quite so pleasant as he ought to have been and was expected to be. At last, seeing a storm rising, for there had been from the first a curious antipathy between our smiling, soft-spoken step-mother and Henry, who, I must confess, is passionate and rather rough mannered, — I rose early from table, that I might get him out of harm's way.

We happened to go into the outer hall, just to cool ourselves, when we were quite startled by a man sitting there, who caught hold of me, and addressed me rudely, as Mrs. Lyne. I said, "No; I was Miss Lyne; did he want Mrs. Lyne?" He answered, "Yes; but he could wait, since he knew she was in the house:" and his manner was so uncivil that I was glad to get away.

About tea-time, the footman whispered Mrs. Lyne that some person had been waiting all the evening in the hall, to see her. She went out hastily, and returned after a good while, her cheeks flushed even beyond their usual steady colour.

"Who was it wanted you?" asked my father, carelessly.

"Only my dress-maker."

Henry, who had just crept up-stairs, pulled my sleeve, with a look of great astonishment, and whispered, "That's not true, sister — it was the man."

Mrs. Lyne's eye — she has such a glaring black eye at times — was upon us in a minute, and my father's too.

"What are you whispering, sir?" said he sharply to Henry.

Now the little fellow has one quality that would atone for a hundred faults; he always tells the direct truth. He answered at once, "I said, it was a man who wanted Mrs. Lyne — a great, dirty man, with black whiskers and a hooked nose; — it was! for I saw them talking."

My father looked furious. "What did they say?"

"He asked her to pay his bill, I thought; but I did not stay listening: I never do," said Harry proudly.

Each moment I expected Mrs. Lyne would burst out in a passion, but she did not: she only smiled, and twirled her handkerchief. "Mr. Lyne, my business was certainly with my dress-maker. I thought

you knew already that your son has a habit of — of deviating from truth, and is certainly a *leetle* revengeful. I fear I stayed your too lavish hand towards him this morning. Poor fellow! — but I can forgive.”

She threw herself back in her chair, smiling her sweetest smile, first at Henry, and then at my father; at which, completely reassured, he would hear no words from my brother or from me. The scene ended in Harry's receiving the cruellest indignity a spirited lad can suffer — stripes; he crying out all the while “that he had spoken only the truth, and sister knew it was so.”

His sister did know it, and frantically declared the same, and the result was — But I have no business to think of my own wrongs.

I have kissed and wept over my poor boy. I have prayed for him and for myself. What shall we do? — I cannot tell.

After writing this, mechanically, with I scarce know what intent, I went to count over what money I had; my allowance having been paid me that day. I had left it open in my dressing-case, carelessly enough, as rich men's daughters do. I found it gone! and never, though it is three weeks since Henry's fatal birth-day, have I seen or heard of it.

The poor lads can have no pleasures for a whole

"Who was it wanted you?" asked my father, carelessly.

"Only my dress-maker."

Henry, who had just crept up-stairs, pulled my sleeve, with a look of great astonishment, and whispered, "That's not true, sister — it was the man."

Mrs. Lyne's eye — she has such a glaring black eye at times — was upon us in a minute, and my father's too.

"What are you whispering, sir?" said he sharply to Henry.

Now the little fellow has one quality that would atone for a hundred faults; he always tells the direct truth. He answered at once, "I said, it was a man who wanted Mrs. Lyne — a great, dirty man, with black whiskers and a hooked nose; — it was! for I saw them talking."

My father looked furious. "What did they say?"

"He asked her to pay his bill, I thought; but I did not stay listening: I never do," said Harry proudly.

Each moment I expected Mrs. Lyne would burst out in a passion, but she did not: she only smiled, and twirled her handkerchief. "Mr. Lyne, my business was certainly with my dress-maker. I thought

you knew already that your son has a habit of — of deviating from truth, and is certainly a *leetle* revengeful. I fear I stayed your too lavish hand towards him this morning. Poor fellow! — but I can forgive.”

She threw herself back in her chair, smiling her sweetest smile, first at Henry, and then at my father; at which, completely reassured, he would hear no words from my brother or from me. The scene ended in Harry's receiving the cruellest indignity a spirited lad can suffer — stripes; he crying out all the while “that he had spoken only the truth, and sister knew it was so.”

His sister did know it, and frantically declared the same, and the result was — But I have no business to think of my own wrongs.

I have kissed and wept over my poor boy. I have prayed for him and for myself. What shall we do? — I cannot tell.

After writing this, mechanically, with I scarce know what intent, I went to count over what money I had; my allowance having been paid me that day. I had left it open in my dressing-case, carelessly enough, as rich men's daughters do. I found it gone! and never, though it is three weeks since Henry's fatal birth-day, have I seen or heard of it.

The poor lads can have no pleasures for a whole

six months, now; but then I shall be of age, and have twenty pounds a year of my own — my very own! Oh, how welcome it will be! I never knew money's worth till now.

I have had to give up my pretty little bed-chamber. It happens to be next my step-mother's, and she wants it for her maid: so I am sent to a room at the top of the house. For some things I do not mind the change — it is so pleasant to catch even a dim glimpse of Hampstead over the forest of chimney-pots.

Then my little brothers like it, for it is near theirs, and is such a refuge from the racketing and turmoil going on below. We sit there whole evenings, and plan what we would do if we all three lived together, far out in the quiet country; and I tell them of all the country pleasures I used to have, years ago, with the three little sisters who came between me and Henry, and died when they were young, I only being left.

— I am glad I lived, if only for the poor boys' sake.

Yesterday, at one of our parties, I overheard Mrs. Lyne saying — what from her sharp glance

and smile I do believe she intended me to overhear — “that it would be an excellent thing if Felicia were married.”

She likewise added, apropos of something her neighbour said, which something I do not care to write down, “Oh, no! poor Felicia would never please a young man of taste and intellect — how could she, with her little doll-like face, and no manners whatsoever?”

I had been dull enough that night, as I often was; no one, at least no one I cared to talk with, ever appearing at Mrs. Lyne's soirées. Her words kept haunting me — foolishly enough; but when one is young one has such a longing to be thought pleasing — such a bashful terror of one's self!

It is true I have blue eyes, and long, light curls; but am I really so doll-like and insipid-looking? I asked Aleck the question to-day, in jest, of course; and the wicked little fellow laughed in my face, and said, *somebody* once told him he ought to be proud of such a sweet sister and especially of her “pretty, pretty curls.” But who it was he would not tell, and nothing could make him.

What a precocious, pert little creature Aleck is growing! And when I confessed about Mrs. Lyne's unkind speech, how both the boys did torment me,

calling me "Miss Doll!" But I deserved it all for my ridiculous vanity.

To-day has been a day which, in our quiet life, solitary amidst a whirl of gaiety, seems full of adventure.

It was the first Monday of the boys' Midsummer holidays, and we went out for a long walk; nobody forbidding, which was rare. The lads dragged me on and on, even as far as Hampstead; where, with a sudden thought of strawberries and cream this time last year, they wanted me to call on Mrs. Redwood. But I could not. Since my father's marriage I have scarcely seen her, or any of the family, except that Mr. Godfrey Redwood sometimes has called; and once or twice has met my brothers on their way from school, and brought them home. He is so kind to them always, and they are wildly fond of him. I could hardly make them understand why we must stay on the Heath, and not intrude ourselves at the Honourable Mrs. Redwood's.

It is a pleasant place — that Heath! All day, Harry, Aleck, and I, wandered up and down, hiding among furze and fern, lying on beds of thyme. More than once the boys made me sing at

the very top of my voice, which I actually did — I felt so cheerful, — though doubtless the act was rather improper, and would have justified my step-mother in her declaration, that I had “no manners whatsoever.”

I took great care to keep at the opposite end of the Heath to where the Redwoods lived. Yet it happened somehow, that as, rather tired out, we were thinking of coming home, we were overtaken by Mr. Godfrey Redwood. He joined us, saying he was himself going to town.

He walked with us across the Heath, first holding the two boys on either hand. Then bidding Aleck see how weary Sister looked, he slipped the child off, and quietly gave me his arm. We had never before walked together thus, out of doors, in the open day.

It was a pleasant evening, and we talked of many things, chiefly about the boys, and about his going abroad the following week for two months or so. He went very unwillingly, he told me. However, he promised Henry to write him word of all the wonders of the Alps, and even to bring him home something from the very spot where William Tell shot at the apple, which greatly delighted the boy. So talking, he went with us the whole way, and said good bye at our door. We had all enjoyed

our walk so much, and were so happy, that I never uttered a less sad good bye. I hardly remembered he was going away at all, until the children obstinately refused to enter the house without seeing "the last of him."

So we all stood at the door and watched him round the Square. At the corner he turned round, perceived us, lifted his hat and bowed. Then we saw him no more.

(No more! The youth Godfrey Redwood — so graceful, manly, gentle, ay and beautiful — for he was beautiful, in heart as in face — I never saw any more!)

Every week, every day, our life at home grows darker and darker. I am my father's daughter in nothing but the name, and in an existence of forced blank idleness, which makes me envy the very housemaid at her toil.

For my two poor boys, they are being slowly ruined. Constant punishment is changing Harry's frank temper into the ferocity of a young tiger; and yesterday, I heard my innocent Aleck — his mother's darling, and her very image — I heard Aleck with frightened lips stammer out — *a lie!*

If *she* had heard him — she who with dying breath left him to my charge!

I sometimes think, when wandering through our beautiful house, or dining at our luxurious table, — If people did but know! And then all sorts of frantic ideas swim through my mind, slowly forming themselves into unutterable longings.

To-day I read in the Proverbs of Solomon: —

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.

I wonder, is it very hard to earn one's bread?

My twenty-first birth-day has come and gone, without any celebration except that of tears. Only, one consciousness forced itself upon my mind: I am of age, and my own mistress now.

It is nearly Christmas. Mr. Redwood wrote Harry word that he should be at home by the New Year, to keep his own coming of age, which I knew was just one month after mine. Yet how much older he always seemed than I!

I am terrified lest he too should see the visible change creeping over my two boys, from which I

cannot, cannot save them, in a home like this. What will be the end of all?

I wrote that question last night; to-night I answer it. For the last time I lay me down to sleep under my father's roof.

This is how it happened. — I wish to write all the particulars clearly, that I may at no future period have to meet an accusing conscience, or the reproaches of my brothers. —

There was to-day one of the usual domestic storms, in which, by Mrs. Lyne's contrivance, Harry and Aleck were punished sorely; and this time — though I know they are not such good boys as they once were — punished unjustly. Then, with her usual smile, — she is always smiling, — my step-mother informed me that after Christmas they were both to be sent from home, to a twenty-pound Yorkshire school, with holidays as she delightedly remarked, only once in two years. I went at once to my father, and asked if it were so? He acknowledged it. I reasoned with him, quietly, earnestly, that in such a school the delicate Aleck would not live a year; and Henry, with his fierce temper, would turn out a perfect demon. He laughed at me. Then I

told him, with tears, that I had promised my mother never to part with the lads. He answered, what I shall not write.

At last, half-maddened, I cried out, "that they should not go."

"Miss Lyne," said he to me, glancing at his wife, who sat compassionately smiling at my wickedness, "I give you one alternative — either let your brothers go peaceably to the school I chose, or else maintain them yourself."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say; you are quite old enough to earn your own bread and theirs; and I really think, with the prospect of a new family rising up, you would be much better out of the way."

I was in that excited state of mind when nothing appears strange, startling, or impossible. So, after a momentary pause, I said resolutely, "Very well, father; we will go."

He made no opposition; did not even seem surprised. I left the study almost immediately; but before I went, I walked up to him, and shook hands, which I am now glad of. There were no more words or disputes, but the thing was done.

To-morrow I shall remove with my brothers to a lodging, try to get daily pupils, and begin the world, with a good education, youth, health, courage, and

twenty pounds a year. Not so bad! — the very thought of toil gives me strength. It is like plunging into a cold bath, after being suffocated with foul vapoury steams.

A strange thought smote me just now. — What will all my friends say? — what will *one friend* say, when he comes back and finds me — a daily governess?

Still, no matter — it must be.

(The day after writing this I arranged all my plans, telling them likewise to my father; for I wished to deal openly and have no quarrel, which, indeed, I always conscientiously had avoided. He listened hurriedly, — for there was a dinner-party awaiting him down-stairs, — wished me success, gave me five pounds (which I quietly left on his table), and bade me not tell my humble address to the servants. Thus we parted, without anger, and, God forgive me! without love.

So, when the guests had sat down to table, I sent off our small luggage, took my brothers in each hand, and went out of my father's doors through the bleak streets, *home.*)

PART II.

WHAT a strange, new life is this on which I have entered so boldly! To-day, after paying my weekly rent in advance, making some slight needful purchases, and providing, much too largely I fear, for household expenses and food, I find we have exactly one sovereign to begin the world with. Well! as my clever Harry remarked, "Benjamin Franklin began with one shilling;" so we are fully nineteen shillings the richer than that great philosopher. Nevertheless, I am glad that my teaching duties commence to-morrow, and that my first week's salary will soon be due.

(Looking back on these days, it seems to me almost a miracle that I had got this situation, the very first I applied for. It must have been some charitable soul who gave me through pity what I took as an ordinary right, not knowing how many a poor unknown, uncredentialed governess waits, hopes, doubts, gradually sinks down lower and lower, despairs, and starves.)

I have taken our lodgings where would be cheapest, and furthest away from our old neighbourhood;

twenty pounds a year. Not so bad! — the very thought of toil gives me strength. It is like plunging into a cold bath, after being suffocated with foul vapoury steams.

A strange thought smote me just now. — What will all my friends say? — what will *one friend* say, when he comes back and finds me — a daily governess?

Still, no matter — it must be.

(The day after writing this I arranged all my plans, telling them likewise to my father; for I wished to deal openly and have no quarrel, which, indeed, I always conscientiously had avoided. He listened hurriedly, — for there was a dinner-party awaiting him down-stairs, — wished me success, gave me five pounds (which I quietly left on his table), and bade me not tell my humble address to the servants. Thus we parted, without anger, and, God forgive me! without love.

So, when the guests had sat down to table, I sent off our small luggage, took my brothers in each hand, and went out of my father's doors through the bleak streets, *home.*)

PART II.

WHAT a strange, new life is this on which I have entered so boldly! To-day, after paying my weekly rent in advance, making some slight needful purchases, and providing, much too largely I fear, for household expenses and food, I find we have exactly one sovereign to begin the world with. Well! as my clever Harry remarked, "Benjamin Franklin began with one shilling;" so we are fully nineteen shillings the richer than that great philosopher. Nevertheless, I am glad that my teaching duties commence to-morrow, and that my first week's salary will soon be due.

(Looking back on these days, it seems to me almost a miracle that I had got this situation, the very first I applied for. It must have been some charitable soul who gave me through pity what I took as an ordinary right, not knowing how many a poor unknown, uncredentialed governess waits, hopes, doubts, gradually sinks down lower and lower, despairs, and starves.)

I have taken our lodgings where would be cheapest, and furthest away from our old neighbourhood;

therefore I shall have a rather long walk into town to my pupil; but exercise is good for me. The boys will be quiet at home; our old servant, who keeps these lodgings, will have an eye upon them; and I shall teach them of an evening. I began to do it to-night, but rather unsuccessfully; they have been too much excited by the change. So I took Aleck on my knee, while Henry placed himself on the other side the fire, quite man-like; and we had a serious talk about "our establishment."

I told them they must not expect many things they had at the Square, fine dinners, and servants to wait; that they must learn to wait upon themselves, and would only get a pudding once a week.

"Twice, sister, please — twice!" begged Aleck; and I yielded.

Also, I tried to make Harry feel how much depended upon him when I was away, and how he could not be a foolish, headstrong, passionate boy any more, but must strive to grow a man as fast as possible. He promised, and to prove it insisted on putting himself and Aleck to bed without my help. Accordingly, passing their door, I found the window slightly open, the candle flaring in its socket in the middle of the floor, and a great round hole burnt in Aleck's socks. But my two darlings were soundly sleeping, as content in that shabby bedroom as if

they were still surrounded by the luxuries due to a rich man's sons. My tears fell as I looked at them; and I prayed God's help that I might bring them up rightly and virtuously, as their mother would have wished. *She*, who knew what misery often lay hid under riches, would not have minded their being poor.

I have gone through the first week of my life as a daily governess. It has been rather harder than I had thought.

I found my one pupil a very big girl, indeed almost a young woman, taller than myself, and with twice as much spirit. She really frightened me, with her fierce black eyes, and her foreign manner, for she is half French. I felt myself shrinking into nothing beside her. Yet though she chattered French and German to an extent that at first alarmed me, on the score of my own acquirements, I find her lamentably ignorant in the real classic knowledge of either language; and as regards English she requires the teaching I would give to little Aleck. Nevertheless, she has such perfect self-assurance, such a strong will, such a thorough ease and independence of manner, that one requires the utmost moral courage

to attempt to teach her any thing. I try to assume all my dignity, and the decision of superior years and knowledge; but yet I am only one and twenty, while she is near fifteen. And oh! if she did but know how dreadfully her poor little governess is at heart afraid of her!

I believed myself tolerably well-educated; surely I am, as regards classical literature. How I always revelled in Dante, and loved the only true French poet, Lamartine, and dived thirstingly into the mysteries of Goethe and Schiller: yet in common conversation I find myself nonplussed continually. It is such a different matter to know a thing oneself, and to impart it to another. I ought now to go to school again, if only to learn how to teach.

There it is again in music. Friends call me a good musician (at least *some* friends did), and I know my love for it is a perfect passion: but there is a vast difference between singing for oneself, or for those whom one cares to please far better than one's self, — and knocking a poor song note by note into the ear and head of a girl who has no more heart for it than, alas! her poor governess has for the teaching. I had to-day to play and sing before Thérèse's mother in proof of my acquirements. I chose a song, — sang many a time to such pleasant praises! but in the singing my eyes filled with tears,

and my heart sank down like lead. I failed deplorably; and I knew it. I had no business to think of such things now I am a daily governess.

Occasionally, too, I have stings of foolish pride; I had to-day, when Madame Giraud asked me abruptly, "if I wanted my salary?" My cheeks burned, as I said, "Yes, if she pleased," and took the gold, so much needed. I thought, — if any old friends could see me then, would they scorn me? But I soon got over this wrong feeling, and walking home, enjoyed the sweetness of first earnings.

Yet at the week's end I am very tired, probably with the long daily walk and the perpetual talking. I am so glad to-morrow is Sunday!

I see clearly, we must live somewhat plainer than we do. It costs more to feed three mouths weekly than I had expected: and as for my taking the omnibus to town on wet days, as Harry insists — wise, thoughtful little man! — *that* is quite impossible; but I need not vex him by saying so.

How changed we all are in a few weeks! how it seems like an age since we "began the world!" The children have become quite used to our new ways, only, poor things! sometimes they cannot understand

why they are restricted in what were once ordinary things, but have now become impracticable luxuries. Harry wants to go out always in his best jacket and French kid gloves; and Aleck still looks and longs daily for the pudding. Poor lads! it goes to my very heart sometimes.

I have not leisure to write my journal often, being every night so glad to go to bed. It is a great blessing that I have such sound, wholesome sleep, which not only refreshes me, but drowns all care for a season.

If I could only send those boys to school, even to the common school they used to attend, I would be so thankful! It is not right for them to be left alone the long, long day; and at night I am so tired, that I fear I do not teach them half carefully enough. I must try some plan or other for them.

— Certainly, it is a kind world, with many good people in it, as I have proved this day.

I “put my pride in my pocket,” and went to Mr. Rawlinson, my brothers’ old schoolmaster. I told him frankly my position, at least so far as I could without blaming my father. I asked him if he would take back one boy, say Henry, and let me in re-

quital give French lessons to his daughters, or in his school.

He not only agreed, but said at my going away, — that two lads gave no more trouble than one, and he must have back *both* his scholars: but he will only permit me to give three lessons a week nevertheless.

My mind is now at rest, and the children are greatly pleased; they did so weary after their old playfellows, as I plainly saw.

Still, every pleasure has its pain; and mine came at last. Seeing a cloud gathering over Harry's mirth, at last I got from him the secret, — he did not like going back to school in his old half-worn blouse. He said the boys would tease him.

Oh! how bitter these things are! But I must bear them: it is not the children's fault.

After little Aleck was asleep, I sat and talked with Henry alone, reasoning with him, as his good sense and manliness deserved, more like a companion than a child. I told him how poor we were, and must necessarily be, for a long time; that the only way in which poor people can remain independent and honest, is by resolving firmly that what they cannot pay for they must do without, — which resolution I had made, and we would all follow. I al-

ways say "we," that the boys may feel we are all as one, to sink or swim together.

"Now, Harry," I said, "I might go to some shop we used to frequent, and get credit, knowing all the time I could not pay. But would that be honest? would you feel happy in your new clothes?"

"No, no!" he cried, sitting up in bed, and hiding his face on my shoulder; "however poor we are, I will be thus much of a gentleman, — 'One that does not owe any body any thing.' — You remember who once told me that."

I did not, — which was strange.

"It was Mr. Redwood: and he knows what it is to be a gentleman, doesn't he, sister?"

"Yes," said I quietly, and said no more.

Mr. Rawlinson mentioned incidentally, that some little time after school began, a gentleman had called to enquire if he knew any thing about the two Master Lynes? and being answered "No," had gone away, leaving no name.

But I know who it was; — whom alone it could be. He has then come home from Italy. The children will be so glad!

The spring is advancing fast; day by day, as I cross the Green Park, I see the change. It has been either sunny weather, or soft, warm, "growing" weather, ever since the boys went to school. I enjoy my daily walk so much; especially the three days a week that I return from Mr. Rawlinson's with the boys.

Then it seems so strange to walk in our old neighbourhood, and see the same shops, and signs, and turnings. But we never go near the Square.

The days are now so light and long, that coming back through Pall Mall and Regent Street I always meet the afternoon loungers. How gay the spring bonnets begin to look! I could be half ashamed of mine, poor old thing! It is astonishing how soon dresses and bonnets will wear out, put on daily, and in all weathers. I could be almost foolish enough to sigh with Harry — "I want new clothes!"

However it signifies little, rushing through the streets as I do, not meeting a soul I know. But, if I did meet any one — I in my unneat winter wrappings, and a bundle of books under my arm! If any one saw me, spoke to me; — *would* they speak? I — that was a young lady in her father's house, and am — only a daily governess!

One friend I know — proud, refined, over-delicate in all that regards women — might start, to

ways say "we," that the boys may feel we are all as one, to sink or swim together.

"Now, Harry," I said, "I might go to some shop we used to frequent, and get credit, knowing all the time I could not pay. But would that be honest? would you feel happy in your new clothes?"

"No, no!" he cried, sitting up in bed, and hiding his face on my shoulder; "however poor we are, I will be thus much of a gentleman, — 'One that does not owe any body any thing.' — You remember who once told me that."

I did not, — which was strange.

"It was Mr. Redwood: and he knows what it is to be a gentleman, doesn't he, sister?"

"Yes," said I quietly, and said no more.

Mr. Rawlinson mentioned incidentally, that some little time after school began, a gentleman had called to enquire if he knew any thing about the two Master Lynes? and being answered "No," had gone away, leaving no name.

But I know who it was; — whom alone it could be. He has then come home from Italy. The children will be so glad!

The spring is advancing fast; day by day, as I cross the Green Park, I see the change. It has been either sunny weather, or soft, warm, "growing" weather, ever since the boys went to school. I enjoy my daily walk so much; especially the three days a week that I return from Mr. Rawlinson's with the boys.

Then it seems so strange to walk in our old neighbourhood, and see the same shops, and signs, and turnings. But we never go near the Square.

The days are now so light and long, that coming back through Pall Mall and Regent Street I always meet the afternoon loungers. How gay the spring bonnets begin to look! I could be half ashamed of mine, poor old thing! It is astonishing how soon dresses and bonnets will wear out, put on daily, and in all weathers. I could be almost foolish enough to sigh with Harry — "I want new clothes!"

However it signifies little, rushing through the streets as I do, not meeting a soul I know. But, if I did meet any one — I in my unneat winter wrappings, and a bundle of books under my arm! If any one saw me, spoke to me; — *would* they speak? I — that was a young lady in her father's house, and am — only a daily governess!

One friend I know — proud, refined, over-delicate in all that regards women — might start, to

think how through this winter I have run through London streets alone, unprotected, in fair weather and foul, in dark or light, often long after dusk — I, who was never allowed to cross the Square by myself! He might think too that it was “strange” or “improper,” my living alone in lodgings, with only my young brothers.

O, wide gulf of worldly distance — opening wider and wider before my eyes! I now begin to see into what I have plunged. Had I thought, when I was quitting my father’s house! — But no; I am glad I did not: I am glad I thought of nothing but my poor little brothers, who now live in peace, so happy and so good.

For me, God will work out my destiny as seemeth Him best!

I have determined to cease going down the pleasant streets where I might by chance meet friends I once knew. I walk along back streets now. Perhaps it is nearest, and I ought to save time if possible.

My brothers asked me to-day, if now that the long summer evenings are coming, I would take them up to Hampstead Heath? But I told them they

would like Blackheath better, and they are quite satisfied, nay, delighted.

How slender is a child's memory! They never now speak of the Square, of old times, or any of our old friends, of whom — as I begin slowly to understand — we may possibly never hear any more.

Thérèse is a very good girl on the whole; affectionate too. She takes care that I have lunch daily; and this morning, seeing I looked pale and tired with the heat, she brought me a glass of wine; saying, her mother desires I should have the same every day — a great blessing to me! and how kind of her! I must try and do my duty by my pupil, even more than I have hitherto done: though Madame Giraud declares she is quite satisfied.

Waiting for Thérèse to-day, I took up a newspaper, as I do occasionally, just to see the births, marriages, and deaths. In the latter, one struck me: —

“On the 19th ult., Sir Egerton Redwood, of Redwood Hall; and, same day, drowned near Vevay, Egerton Redwood, Esq., his eldest and only surviving son. The baronetcy and influential family property fall, therefore, to the next heir, Godfrey Egerton Redwood, Esq., son of the

think how through this winter I have run through London streets alone, unprotected, in fair weather and foul, in dark or light, often long after dusk — I, who was never allowed to cross the Square by myself! He might think too that it was “strange” or “improper,” my living alone in lodgings, with only my young brothers.

O, wide gulf of worldly distance — opening wider and wider before my eyes! I now begin to see into what I have plunged. Had I thought, when I was quitting my father’s house! — But no; I am glad I did not: I am glad I thought of nothing but my poor little brothers, who now live in peace, so happy and so good.

For me, God will work out my destiny as seemeth Him best!

I have determined to cease going down the pleasant streets where I might by chance meet friends I once knew. I walk along back streets now. Perhaps it is nearest, and I ought to save time if possible.

My brothers asked me to-day, if now that the long summer evenings are coming, I would take them up to Hampstead Heath? But I told them they

would like Blackheath better, and they are quite satisfied, nay, delighted.

How slender is a child's memory! They never now speak of the Square, of old times, or any of our old friends, of whom — as I begin slowly to understand — we may possibly never hear any more.

Thérèse is a very good girl on the whole; affectionate too. She takes care that I have lunch daily; and this morning, seeing I looked pale and tired with the heat, she brought me a glass of wine; saying, her mother desires I should have the same every day — a great blessing to me! and how kind of her! I must try and do my duty by my pupil, even more than I have hitherto done: though Madame Giraud declares she is quite satisfied.

Waiting for Thérèse to-day, I took up a newspaper, as I do occasionally, just to see the births, marriages, and deaths. In the latter, one struck me: —

“On the 19th ult., Sir Egerton Redwood, of Redwood Hall; and, same day, drowned near Vevay, Egerton Redwood, Esq., his eldest and only surviving son. The baronetcy and influential family property fall, therefore, to the next heir, Godfrey Egerton Redwood, Esq., son of the

late Colonel and the Honourable Anne Redwood, and grandson of the lately deceased Baronet."

"Sir Godfrey Redwood!" How strange it sounds! But he will make a noble use of fortune: God grant him happiness long to possess it!

— I must still look a little longer in the list of "Marriages."

To-day, I have walked more slowly home, nor minded passing through the sunny streets and gay throngs of people in my sombre and dust-spoiled clothing. It is quite good enough for one who will probably all her life have to earn her bread as a daily governess.

PART III.

HENRY and I measured heights to-day; and he is actually taller than I am. So, coming home from Mr. Rawlinson's, he would insist upon giving me his arm, considering that he was yesterday fifteen years old.

(This is the next entry added to my foolish, girlish journal, preserved till now, from the still more foolish tenderness one has over girlish things. I had always a love of hoarding relics, memories, every thing but coin. The long pause in my writing was occasioned doubtless by want of leisure, during four years of a toilsome and yet monotonous life; — the recommencement of my journal was owing to want of occupation, during that trying period "waiting for a situation.")

Remembering his birth-day, puts me in mind that my own is about this time. Twenty-six, or seven, is it? I have almost lost count. However, I must have been Thérèse's governess five years. That is why I shall miss her so much. Yet it is quite time for her to give up study, and practise housekeeping for a few months before she is mar-

ried. I wish — as she laughing said — I could teach her *that*, meaning the management of a house. But in the domestic department my own abilities are small; indeed they have completely died out for want of practice. Which signifies little; since, as I told Thérèse this morning — I shall probably never have a house to manage.

She looked very sly, said, laughing, how did I know? and appealed to her father; who, since her mother's death, two years since, has made her his constant companion. M. Giraud took no notice of Thérèse's nonsense; he is a perfectly well-bred man, just, generous, and kind, so much so, that in these years I have all but forgotten he is by birth the great object of my girlish antipathy — a Frenchman.

He has been very kind to the boys too — my dear boys! of whom I am so proud. Ah, if their mother could but see them now!

Yet I have thanked God that she could not see, that no one could see, all we have passed through; the struggles, the humiliations, the narrow, grinding penury; and, had my health once failed, the awful spectre Want standing ever at the door. But I did not sink: a supernatural strength has borne me up through every thing; and He who gave it knows that strength was not my own.

Now, though I am still full of anxieties — terrified when I see Aleck look delicate and weary; or Harry's cheek sharpening out of boyhood into youth; I yet live in present peace, and trust in Providence for the time to come.

Only, if I *could* hear of another situation before Thérèse's marriage! for I do not like taking my full salary when I teach her nothing, and am only as it were a friend and companion. But she and her father agree in compelling me to this, and I dare not refuse.

Oh, Need — imperious Need — what a tyrant thou art!

Strange things have befallen me to-day.

Leaving Thérèse early, I thought I would walk round, as I have done once or twice, by a print-shop in Pall Mall, to see something I should surely see there. There is no need to make any secret about it; it was a likeness of some one whom I knew — before the world knew him, as it does now.

Three years ago, I found in the "Times" newspaper Sir Godfrey Redwood's maiden speech: he had entered Parliament. We were then rich enough to afford a newspaper, so I often saw his name in the

ried. I wish — as she laughing said — I could teach her *that*, meaning the management of a house. But in the domestic department my own abilities are small; indeed they have completely died out for want of practice. Which signifies little; since, as I told Thérèse this morning — I shall probably never have a house to manage.

She looked very sly, said, laughing, how did I know? and appealed to her father; who, since her mother's death, two years since, has made her his constant companion. M. Giraud took no notice of Thérèse's nonsense; he is a perfectly well-bred man, just, generous, and kind, so much so, that in these years I have all but forgotten he is by birth the great object of my girlish antipathy — a Frenchman.

He has been very kind to the boys too — my dear boys! of whom I am so proud. Ah, if their mother could but see them now!

Yet I have thanked God that she could not see, that no one could see, all we have passed through; the struggles, the humiliations, the narrow, grinding penury; and, had my health once failed, the awful spectre Want standing ever at the door. But I did not sink: a supernatural strength has borne me up through every thing; and He who gave it knows that strength was not my own.

Now, though I am still full of anxieties — terrified when I see Aleck look delicate and weary; or Harry's cheek sharpening out of boyhood into youth; I yet live in present peace, and trust in Providence for the time to come.

Only, if I *could* hear of another situation before Thérèse's marriage! for I do not like taking my full salary when I teach her nothing, and am only as it were a friend and companion. But she and her father agree in compelling me to this, and I dare not refuse.

Oh, Need — imperious Need — what a tyrant thou art!

Strange things have befallen me to-day.

Leaving Thérèse early, I thought I would walk round, as I have done once or twice, by a print-shop in Pall Mall, to see something I should surely see there. There is no need to make any secret about it; it was a likeness of some one whom I knew — before the world knew him, as it does now.

Three years ago, I found in the "Times" newspaper Sir Godfrey Redwood's maiden speech: he had entered Parliament. We were then rich enough to afford a newspaper, so I often saw his name in the

Debates. Afterwards, when Henry wanted to take in "Chambers' Journal" instead, I managed to read the "Times" at Thérèse's house.

Sir Godfrey Redwood is a celebrated man now; so celebrated, that besides the print in the shop-window, round which I daily see a small crowd of curious gazers, I often catch in the common talk of strangers, the old familiar name. Nobody knows, what perhaps I have no right to tell, — that he was once a friend of mine. Nevertheless, it is quite natural that I should feel proud of this; and it does not harm him, or any one, that I have pleasure in seeing his name in the newspaper, or in coming round now and then by that print-shop, to look at his portrait — like, and yet unlike. He must have changed much since we knew him.

To-day, as I stood at the shop-window, — an unlady-like act, it may be, but I feel I am now too old-looking and plainly dressed to mind much what I do, provided it is not wrong, — there came up a groom and a led horse. Its owner quickly passed out of the shop, and mounted; then, just looking round with a half-smile, that swept indifferently over the shop-window, the little crowd there, — and me, off he rode.

It was the glimpse of a moment, but I could not

be mistaken; I have to-day seen Godfrey — I mean, *Sir* Godfrey Redwood.

And he did not know me! But how could he? The years which have made of him a man, have made me — yes, I am quite right in calling myself “an old woman.”

I turned my face again to the shop-window, and gazed in upon a dazzle of black and white engravings, till a hand touched me, and some one said — “Miss Lyne?” I need not have started so, as it was only Thérèse’s father.

He said “he had been watching me a long time: was I then so very fond of prints? — he would procure me as many rare ones as I liked.” I thanked him, and was passing on, when I grew quite sick and weak — it was such a burning summer-day.

M. Giraud took my arm in his, very kindly; and before I well knew how it was, I found myself crossing the Park with him, in the direction of my home. He said, I believe, that he wanted to consult with me about Thérèse, or the future, or something — I forget what exact reason he gave. But ere long we had reached a quiet, retired walk, and Thérèse’s father was talking, not about her, but about himself and me.

I do not know much of love-making; nor did he, this honest, generous-hearted, grave man of middle

age, try to "make love." All I know is, that then and there, in that quiet shady walk, M. Giraud asked me to be his wife.

If he had been a foolish boy mocking me with silly, flattering speeches, or a young man whose passionate devotion might torture me with the memory of my own lost youth, I should have felt it less: but this man, — asking no love, only the right of showing tenderness; ready to be father, brother, friend, husband, — every thing — to poor forlorn me, — it went to my heart's core!

I believe I wept much; but I am quite sure that I gave no answer of acceptance or encouragement, which might afterwards smite my conscience. I rather think I said nothing at all; for hurrying me home, he left me; telling me he would wait for my decision until next day.

So this night I have to choose whether I will at once lay aside all my burden of worldly cares, and become a good man's cherished wife. It would be so, I feel; I know what he was to poor Madame Giraud, what he is to Thérèse and the younger three. That he is somewhat advanced in years, I would not mind; nor even that he is a Frenchman — when a Frenchman is a true man and a gentleman.

Then, my two brothers, fast growing up, needing soon to be established in the world. And he told

me, among other things, that, from the day he married me, he should look upon Henry and Aleck in the light of his own children. That day, he wishes — and Thérèse too, he brought me her own written desire, — should be the same which removes his eldest daughter from his home. Only six weeks hence; — one brief six weeks! — and I might be no longer a poor governess, but an honoured wife!

I feel almost bewildered. Such a change! not for me only, but for my dear boys. Surely I ought to forget every thing except them — to crush out the old life, to tread old feelings into dust, and so walk on that silent pathway — it is *only* dust, now, — quite calm and smiling, up to the very church-door. But *there*, — in the presence of God, before whom, as well as before my husband, I must take the marriage-vow — Dare I?

I have lifted down a Prayer Book, — my mother's, — and read the whole marriage-service through.

“I require and charge you both (as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed) that if either of you know any impediment —”

“Wilt thou . . . forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him—”

I closed the book.

age, try to "make love." All I know is, that then and there, in that quiet shady walk, M. Giraud asked me to be his wife.

If he had been a foolish boy mocking me with silly, flattering speeches, or a young man whose passionate devotion might torture me with the memory of my own lost youth, I should have felt it less: but this man, — asking no love, only the right of showing tenderness; ready to be father, brother, friend, husband, — every thing — to poor forlorn me, — it went to my heart's core!

I believe I wept much; but I am quite sure that I gave no answer of acceptance or encouragement, which might afterwards smite my conscience. I rather think I said nothing at all; for hurrying me home, he left me; telling me he would wait for my decision until next day.

So this night I have to choose whether I will at once lay aside all my burden of worldly cares, and become a good man's cherished wife. It would be so, I feel; I know what he was to poor Madame Giraud, what he is to Thérèse and the younger three. That he is somewhat advanced in years, I would not mind; nor even that he is a Frenchman — when a Frenchman is a true man and a gentleman.

Then, my two brothers, fast growing up, needing soon to be established in the world. And he told

me, among other things, that, from the day he married me, he should look upon Henry and Aleck in the light of his own children. That day, he wishes — and Thérèse too, he brought me her own written desire, — should be the same which removes his eldest daughter from his home. Only six weeks hence; — one brief six weeks! — and I might be no longer a poor governess, but an honoured wife!

I feel almost bewildered. Such a change! not for me only, but for my dear boys. Surely I ought to forget every thing except them — to crush out the old life, to tread old feelings into dust, and so walk on that silent pathway — it is *only* dust, now, — quite calm and smiling, up to the very church-door. But *there*, — in the presence of God, before whom, as well as before my husband, I must take the marriage-vow — Dare I?

I have lifted down a Prayer Book, — my mother's, — and read the whole marriage-service through.

“I require and charge you both (as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed) that if either of you know any impediment —”

“Wilt thou . . . forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him—”

I closed the book.

It is impossible! Poor I have been, very poor — ay, and very miserable; but I have ever borne a clear conscience before God and man. So it shall still be. I will not perjure myself in the sight of Heaven; nor enter the married state with a lie upon my soul.

I have written to-night to M. Giraud, telling him that circumstances have made me fixedly resolve not to marry, but to devote myself entirely to the care of my two brothers. He is of too generous a nature, and knows too well my firmness of purpose in all things, to attempt to change my resolution.

One sentence I have on mature consideration added to my letter — that, should sickness or premature death prevent my fulfilling my duty towards my boys, I trust to him — the only man who ever really loved me — to take care of Henry and Aleck until they grow to be men.

Now, as it is long past midnight, I shall lay me down, and try to sleep. Ah! how quietly those sleep, who, as said a poor dying poet, whose poetry we used to read when I was young, “feel the daisies growing over them!” God forgive me! — me, who have two young souls of His giving to rear up for His eternity! — I must not yet think of the “daisies.”

It has all ended as I hoped; and even my dear Thérèse has forgiven me. I trust, ere long, her excellent father may find a worthy companion for himself and a good mother for his little children: then my mind will be quite at rest.

Though I have seen him no more, he has managed, through Thérèse's husband, to find me some most acceptable pupils; and he has never ceased his kindness to my boys.

My dear mother used to say, when sometimes we talked, half jesting, of the wooers that were to come to me, "that it was usually a woman's own fault, if in rejecting a lover she also lost a friend." I have proved deeply and thankfully the truth of that saying.

(Two years intervened here — two long, slow, silent years. Of these no records remain, because — I burnt them. It was a great deal the best. Every one who can weed his life, or his life's outward evidences, of all gloomy, erring, or hurtful memorials, is as much bound to do it, as he is bound to root out from his garden all things that might prove painful or injurious to those that come after him.

We should always remember, that in the saddest human life all sadness necessarily ends when the tomb closes; often, with God's blessing, long before then. And none of us, quitting the world, should leave behind us the

thorns that have mercifully dropped off from our own brows, to cumber and fester younger feet.

I am now, in my old age, a firm advocate for that blessed sunshine of existence, — a cheerful spirit, — which I believe to be, no less than a meek and quiet one, "*in the sight of God of great price.*")

Harry is, I do believe, and everybody says so, the handsomest lad imaginable. I did so wish him to grow six feet high; which desire seems very likely to be accomplished. He is strong, too; especially since last summer, when we were rich enough to go down to the sea. What a merry time we had! and how Aleck, quiet and gentle as he is, became quite boisterous, and wanted to turn sailor. But the salt-water mania has died away in these two months; for which somebody I know is very thankful. Any thing but red-coats and blue-jackets, I hate both — as I tell the boys when they talk of what they intend to be.

What, alas! Heaven only knows, for I do not. I can only find them bread from year to year. As to putting them to any profession, that is utterly impossible; and somehow, with a feeling that may be wrong but yet is natural, I shrink from seeing Henry or Alexander Lyne, sprung from the old Lynes and

Trevethlans of Cornwall, standing behind a counter, or running about as a lawyer's clerk.

Still, the trial is not quite at hand. Harry's education is not finished yet; and I will trust to that good Providence, which has hitherto enabled me to earn for them not merely necessities but many comforts, still to make my way plain before me.

I think Harry will turn out a wonderfully clever youth, and that I did right, when good Mr. Rawlinson died, in straining every nerve that the lad should go to King's College School for a year. He will be seventeen next October, and then — Well, until then I will wait calmly: "Sufficient unto the day is" not only "the evil," but the anxious burden "thereof." We never know what lightening the morrow may bring.

. . . I wrote yesterday this last line. There must have been a good angel standing by, and smiling while I wrote. Ah, no! our "good angel" wore a human likeness — a likeness we all knew! I write this with tears of joy, not so much for having found again an old friend, but for having also found, what amidst all doubt I never wholly lost, my faith in the ideal of my youth.

If from this moment I were never to set eyes on the "good angel" I spoke of; or if, harder still, eyes whose kindness I value were henceforth to rest on me in utter strangeness, forgetfulness, or dislike; — I still should feel the happiness which I feel now. A happiness which being wholly without reference to myself, is as pure as that of some forced iconoclast, who, wakening from a miserable dream, sees the broken idol sitting unshattered and godlike fair, nay, sees the imaged marble changed into the visible Divinity. What matters it into what dim corner of the great world-temple one creeps, so that one knows the glorious presence is still abiding there!

— This is certainly a little piece of insanity, worthy of the Felicia Lyne of old: but it is only temporary; I shall be "Miss Lyne the governess," to-morrow.

After a day or two, I have leisure and quietness to write down the circumstance which has made such a change in the boys' future, and consequently in mine.

It was the day of the prize-distribution at King's College; and Henry had taken his younger brother with him "to see the fun," as he boldly called it, —

poor Harry! though I noticed how pale he was all breakfast-time — aware that his own fate hung upon the balance. Since, till their names are called out, none of the boys know who are the winners of prizes.

I could not go, for pleasure must always yield to duty, in my profession; and I had two music lessons to give that afternoon.

Returning home I found to my surprise that the lads were not come in; I should have been foolishly restless, only I knew Aleck's good sense, and how, had any disappointment befallen his brother, no one could calm him better than Aleck could. So I employed myself in seeing that dinner was all ready, and in making the room neat — a weary business where there are two growing boys. And I am getting such a fidgetty particular old maid, — as Harry often tells me; though he always kisses me afterwards, lest I should be vexed.

— How long I am in coming to my story!

It was six in the evening, and I was growing thoroughly wretched and frightened, when I heard a knock, and a foot that could be none but Harry's, leaping up stairs (we live on the drawing-room floor now). In a minute, the lad burst in, all delight, and Aleck after him.

“Oh! sister, sister, only guess!” they both cried.

"No! don't let her guess," said a third voice; and then I saw that a gentleman was with my boys. One — than whom I would sooner have expected to see an angel of heaven standing in our room!

"I should have known your face any where, Miss Lyne, though I fear you have forgotten mine." — He was mistaken in both these things; but it did not signify.

Very soon we had shaken hands cordially, and partly from Harry, partly from Aleck, I began to hear how my brothers had met with Sir Godfrey Redwood.

He, now a man of consideration, had been invited to the distribution; there in the College Hall, he had heard called out the name of Henry Trevethlan Lyne; and seeing my boy walk up to receive his well-earned prize, had made sure it was his old favourite. Afterwards he had spoken to the lads, and they had told him our whole story. It was very different from the one my step-mother had given him concerning us, some eight years ago. No wonder he had suffered us gradually to drop out of his memory, unworthy a good man's thought.

He dined with us that day, though the proud boys were rather shocked that he should see our humble board. And all that evening, with the June sun slanting in upon his face, — in which the former

boyish likeness gleamed strangely at times, though he is much changed by the thick moustache and beard he wears, foreign fashion, — Sir Godfrey Redwood sat talking, sometimes gaily, sometimes thoughtfully, with “Miss Lyne the governess,” and her brothers.

I saw in the first ten minutes, that despite his kind courtesy about knowing my face, he, too, was struck by the change which I so clearly perceive in myself; and that if the old “Felicia” had not been long swept out from what could have been at best a mere boyish memory, the sight of “Miss Lyne” had now made it, and all belonging to it, irrevocably *the past*. It was well for me that I had discernment and strength of mind enough at once to assure myself of this, so that our future intercourse may be, as indeed it is, perfectly free and unembarrassed on either side.

Sir Godfrey told us much of what had happened to himself since the days when he used to visit at the Square. It was the ordinary life of a young man of fortune, filled up with many extravagances and follies, all of which he owned so freely, that one could plainly discern — even if his whole countenance, bearing, and the accidental nothings by which we judge of character, had not confirmed the fact — that there had been in him no vice; that the son of

his proud and virtuous mother was, as I had long learnt from other sources, the stay and glory of the Redwood house.

His "wild oats," he said, had been sown early, abroad and at home, and he was now in the midst of manhood's grave and earnest career, — the career of one who deeply felt, that as regarded talents, influence, and the power of doing good, to him much had been given, and of him much would surely be required.

Harry asked him if he was married? to which he laughingly answered, "No, nor engaged either, though he had been in love and out of love at least a dozen times, as Master Harry would himself ere long."

Then, turning to me, he changed his tone to seriousness, and spoke of all the cares he had had with his younger brothers and sisters, and what a happy and noble mistress his mother made at Redwood Hall. "It would be long ere I should find a Lady Redwood like her," added he, smiling; and then the conversation died.

But now comes that act of generosity, which I find my brother Henry and he had settled entirely between themselves before ever the matter was confided to me, though of course my nominal consent was to be asked as a seal to the bond.

Sir Godfrey is about to proceed abroad as *chargé d'affaires* at —. He wishes to take with him Henry, who at seventeen — nay sixteen, for it wants three months to his birthday — is as manly-looking and manly-minded as many a youth of twenty. He said, the boy should be his secretary, or *attaché*, — some nominal office, through which I see clearly his generous purpose of taking all care for Harry's future entirely upon himself.

And Harry must go. It would break the lad's heart did I refuse. I have no right to let any foolish scruple stand in the light of this, the sole chance that may ever offer of my darling brother's earning his bread and making his way in the world in the sole manner that his proud nature would ever thoroughly bend to — as a gentleman. Besides, as Sir Godfrey reminded me, this change in fortune only replaces Harry in the sphere where he was born; since — like water, the pure blood of the Trevethlans and the Lynes will always find its own level.

When he said so, I smiled, and in my turn reminded him that I was still "the governess."

"Well!" he answered, "and what is more honourable than a governess, when she is a lady by birth, or at least by education, as all governesses ought to be? What more noble than a woman who devotes

her whole life to the sowing of good seed, the fruitage of which she may never see? If I ever have a wife and children," here his eyes smiled with some dim, dawning thought, "I will teach them, that after father and mother there is no one on earth to whom they owe such reverence as to her on whom depends the formation not only of their intellect, but of their whole mind and character. But, accordingly, I will take care that this model governess is worthy of the trust, — a true lady, and more, a true *woman*, — in fact, just such a woman as you are yourself, Miss Lyne."

I had no answer to that. I — *his* children's governess!

Still, it gives me comfort to think he should so honour the sisterhood to which I belong — unto which I had joined myself in humiliated despair, until at last I began to wear my heavy chains as the badge of a worthy service, and to discover that every governess has it in her power to make herself, and with herself all her fraternity, revered and honourable in the sight of the world.

Henry is gone away — Henry, my noble, handsome boy! my right hand and stronghold in the bitter days of adversity, which hardly seemed ad-

versity when borne for him! But, please God! there is only prosperity in store for him now. — Also, for me and little Aleck, still *little*, gentle, and pale. But Aleck shall go to college, if he likes, nevertheless; for he too must be well educated, as is his brother. My mother's sons shall not be inferior in any way to the children who, I hear, cluster round my father's hearth, and will inherit his property. Well! we envy them not. May they prove a comfort to his old age!

To-night Aleck and I have sat for the last time in our old lodgings, from which we are now removing nearer town. I cannot walk so well as I used to do, and we need better rooms, since the situation I have now obtained through Sir Godfrey Redwood, and which I have promised him to hold until he and Harry return home, is one of a higher class and higher salary than any I have hitherto had. Think of my teaching a little Lady Anne!

She is the youngest daughter of a poor earl — I see he is poor for an earl; but he lives in honest retirement, keeping within his means; which is doubtless the reason why Sir Godfrey honours him so much. I honour him too, and his three fair daughters, as cordially as if they had not “a handle” to their pretty Christian names.

A quiet yet somewhat dull tea we had, Aleck

and I; and then we sat in the twilight, talking, and watching the shadows in the room, which now seems mean yet once appeared to us magnificent, compared to the former back-parlour. The poor old room, which has seen so much! We almost grew sad to think we should no more watch the street-lamp's glimmer creeping in along the wall, so pleasant and dim — besides often saving us an hour or two of candle-light, in times when every small saving was of pathetic value. Ah! the poor old room!

Soon we broke off talking of the past to speculate on the dawning future, and to wonder whether it would be two years, three, or four ere Harry came back! and if so, what a man he would be! — Especially when in the constant society of such a perfect gentleman as Sir Godfrey Redwood. Aleck quite envied him that; for Aleck, with all his quietness, has an exquisite taste for the refinements of life. Nay, coming one day to fetch me home, he has quite fallen in love with my little Lady Anne, and I hear of nothing else from morning till night. The foolish boy! Sixteen and five feet four to adore eleven and four feet nothing! But Aleck is a young poet, and so, as I tell him, must fain begin the usual destiny of poets — to be *always* in love!

Love! — Have I, even I, begun lightly to use that solemn word?

Aleck is at last gone to bed, and I have taken away his candle, lest he should set the house on fire through reading novels, which would be a pretty climax to our long abiding here.

I go up to my own room, and in its solitary silence think of many things — chiefly, of the steamer which, under this same midnight moon, is floating down the broad Thames, and bearing with it my best treasures in this world, — bearing them to a future, in which as regards neither, shall I have in time to come any share or claim. Both will ere long have taken to their hearts much nearer ties. To-night Aleck made me laugh, by prophesying that it would not be very many years before I dandled on my knees Harry's children: — and Sir Godfrey Redwood gaily promised I should be governess to his! All these jests will one day come true; and then I, — this one solitary I —

No matter! — May'st Thou, O God, receive the life-sacrifice on which, year by year, I have thrown all that was lovely and precious in my eyes, and so make the offering — worthless of itself — sweet and acceptable in Thine!

PART IV.

That boy Aleck! that foolish, comical, impressible fellow! —

(This must have been written two years or more after the time when Harry went away, and I began to teach the Ladies Airlie. I say “the Ladies Airlie,” because, in addition to my own pupil, I used occasionally to give music-lessons to Lady Dorothy and Lady Maud. In fact, I was very much with them all; more like a friend than a governess. Those two years were a bright portion of my life; I was very happy [for me]; so happy, that I scarcely ever touched my journal.) —

That boy Aleck will certainly go crazy after his little goddess! He has had three other child-sweethearts in eighteen months, and now he has come back to “my bonnie Ladie Ann.” I can now hear him singing to himself that same ballad of Allan Cunningham’s, fragments of which he indulges me with at breakfast and tea, something about

“The cherry lip, the creamy loof,
Or the waist o’ Ladie Ann,”

generally going through the whole poem, until he gets to

“I am her father’s gardener lad;”

at which he pauses, and looks as proud as if the ghosts of all the ancient Lynes and Trevethlans were peering out from the eyes of their young descendant. My patience alive! (a harmless expletive that, though it seems ridiculous enough when written,) what is to be done with the boy?

He wants sadly a little reality — some active, busy, earnest life, such as is led by his brother. How happy Harry seems! and how beautiful his letters are! gradually toning down into manliness. I think on the whole, that though not so much of a dreamer, he will turn out a finer character than Aleck. But then Aleck is always with me, and one’s heart clings so closely to those that are away. “One’s heart clings so closely to those that are away!” — How much truth there is in these words!

It was my birthday yesterday; a fact which little Lady Anne coaxed out of me, seeing I looked rather grave. She also won from me another secret, which, indeed, I had no reason or design to keep, — that I was thirty-one years old.

Thirty-one years old! — It is time I put up my “pretty, pretty curls,” which, through a foolish fancy,

I have carefully kept all these years. Nobody would ever be so blind as to call them "pretty" now; and whatsoever I did with them, nobody would notice the change. So to-morrow I will begin wearing my hair quite plain, which is indeed much more suitable to any one who is no longer a girl.

Lady Dorothy and Lady Maud both gave me birthday-presents — quick, warm-hearted, impulsive gifts. Moreover, which was better than the gift, Lady Maud kissed me, bending over me with her silent, tall, graceful, white-lily-like air. I greatly admire Lady Maud. But merry, frank-spoken Lady Dorothy thought it a very dreadful thing to be thirty-one years old, especially when one was not married, and apparently did not intend to be; which, she politely observed, was certainly Miss Lyne's own fault, and a very disgraceful determination, too!

I laughed, and Lady Maud, whose words, though rare, are always as fragrant as the perfume that comes out of a white-lily-cup — there my fantastic simile holds good! — Lady Maud said, "It mattered little: whether old or young, married or unmarried, a woman like Miss Lyne was sure to be happy."

Happy! — Alone, in my own home, I sit and ponder over that word.

I go out into the world, and see other homes full of selfishness, misery, and strife: — mine is all

peace; there is never in it a shadow of disquiet or contention. Except, to be sure, when Aleck persists in sitting up writing poetry till two in the morning.

I see around me restlessness, ennui, young lives wasted in doing nothing, — until out of the dull void of an aimless existence gradually forms a chaos, seething continually with all its elements of passion and of pain, from which nothing but the touch of a Divine hand will ever evolve a perfect orb. Now, *my* life, — steadily rolling on, with rarely a moment left for weariness or regret, every day bringing its duties, and every night closing them in rest, — would I change? — No.

Young people come to me with their troubles, especially love-troubles; poor frenzied strugglers through the seas which all must cross; dashed from rock to rock, of fate, or folly, or wrong, each one thinking there is in the whole world no other sufferer, at least no greater sufferer, than he. I sit and listen so quietly, am sorry for all, and try to help all; while my outward smile creeps peacefully into my own inward heart, with a consciousness that there are some portions of the solemn life-journey which no one ever has to pass through *twice*.

Yes, I think Lady Maud's chance saying was true; I believe I am truly "happy."

Was there not an ancient sage who said, "No man can be pronounced truly happy until he dies?"

— Who would have thought it? who could have told? So unexpected, too! But, as Aleck was saying only that very day, every thing in the fortunes of our family seems to happen suddenly.

We two were sitting at tea, on Good Friday, of all days in the year: I thinking what I should do during a week of entire holiday, and Aleck rather glum, because, though Lady Dorothy had called him "her poet-laureate," — Lady Maud had said, in her gracious and gentle way, what good a little country air would do to a delicate boy, — and little Lady Anne had openly declared she would ask her god-mother, Mrs. Redwood, to invite him with them to Dorsetshire; — still Easter was come, and they had all gone down, save, alas! poor Aleck, to Redwood Hall.

I had told the boy it was a foolish dream, and that, despite "all the blood of all the Howards," *i. e.* the Trevethlans, and all the gentle humility of the impoverished noble household, there was a great difference between them and us; that he was still but a college-student, and brother of "the governess."

But at eighteen one does build such airy palaces! "Every man his own Aladdin," as I said merrily. "Youths running about barefoot and contented, each with *the lamp* in his bosom."

Aleck laughed, declaring I was growing quite poetical; so, just for fun, and to pass time away, we began speculating what we each would do, had we the lamp or the ring.

My foolish boy quickly built in imagination a palace, very Aladdinish, on the banks of Windermere (whither I had managed to send him after his illness last autumn); and was just creating a princess to put into it, which princess strongly resembled a full-grown Lady Anne, — when he recollected I had not had my turn.

He said, "Now, sister, what would you wish for?"

I was silent a moment, remembering the days when I used to wish "at the moon;" but I am not so simple now. So I began to build my Aladdin-palace of real stones — possibilities.

"Then, Aleck, I think if we were sitting just as we are, — I am sure we are very comfortable, — and if, instead of Henry's next letter, which ought to come this week, there were to come —"

"Henry?"

I smiled, and was going on, when — I can only

state, not explain, the odd coincidence — there was a loud, sudden knock at the street-door. Following the knock, came the old quick-bounding footstep, — three stairs at a time, — and Harry was in the room!

Ay, my own Harry, my real Harry! though he was six feet high, with a deep, firm voice, and an awful moustache and beard; — though he lifted his little old sister right up into his arms, frightening her almost out of her seven senses, and by his foreign and stylish appearance so awed Aleck that for the first minute or two, the lad hardly ventured to speak to his brother; — still — still — he was our own Harry!

I had, I thank God! such entire joy in seeing him, such perfect home-delight, that I never once thought whether Harry had come here alone.

He had done so, as he very soon told us: Sir Godfrey having gone down at once to Redwood Hall.

We had tea a second time for our Harry — the old pleasant tea-making, which he seemed to enjoy so much, and remember so tenderly. He even reminded me of the winter nights when I used to stretch over between him and Aleck, lying like lazy puppies on the hearth, and make the toast by the parlour-fire. My dear Harry! —

He has grown up a perfect gentleman: how could he else, under the influence of such a friend? Better than all, my boy has kept his own pure heart, only guided into experience by one that is not only pure but wise.

In every way Sir Godfrey Redwood has fulfilled his trust, and Henry's attachment to him knows no bounds. That my brother, my darling brother, should owe every thing to the man whom I always held to be the best man on earth, — is not this happiness? A happiness, that perhaps is better, deeper, truer, than what I might have deemed such, once!

Harry says that Sir Godfrey Redwood is very well in health, and full of joy at coming home. He sent likewise a kind message to Harry's sister, saying I should hear from him soon.

I have heard we are all to go down on a three-days' visit to Redwood Hall. I would fain have declined, being, as I told the boys, half-frightened at the Honourable Anne Redwood, whom I have never seen since the days when I visited her as a "young lady at home." She might be proud toward Miss Lyne the governess. But my two brothers,

who seem to have fairly taken rule over me, will hear no excuse.

Besides, Henry longs for the Dorsetshire shooting, and, as he told me privately, desires to hear more of a plan which Sir Godfrey has all but settled for his future career, in which he, Henry Trevethlan Lyne, is to bring great honour back to the old family. God bless the hand that makes my boy so happy!

Also, Aleck is urgent for the visit. He knows he shall meet there his two great patronesses — Lady Dorothy and Lady Maud, to say nothing of his child-goddess, his “bonnie Lady Ann.” For me, I shall meet —

But I shall meet likewise, what every where has encompassed and sustained me — the strength, counsel, and guard of Him who has never forsaken me, nor will forsake me, even unto the end.

The first day and night of our visit are over.

We arrived just half an hour before dinner; and I saw no one till I had descended. I was nervous and trembling: it was ten years since I had been on a visit any where, at least in such a stately house as this. It was a positive terror to me to descend the stairs, until at the foot I perceived some one

waiting for me. At first I drew back, — till I saw it was only Harry, my own kind Harry.

He laughed at me merrily; and I went into the drawing room quite bold and proud, — oh! so proud! — leaning on my boy's arm.

I cannot tell much about the meeting, except that Mrs. Redwood was very gracious, even tender, for her; that she said I was scarcely at all altered (ah! but she only saw me by lamp-light, and with her feeble, aged eyes), and that, what touched me most, she called me by my girl-name, *Felicia*.

For her son, he could not be otherwise than kind.

When dinner was announced, Sir Godfrey left Lady Maud, with whom he was conversing, and took me down stairs. I did not expect that. From her smile, I think she must have told him to do it; showing me by this courtesy that I still held my old position in society. If so, it was a gentle and generous act, like Lady Maud.

Once in the evening, when a cluster of the family-party was gathered round the fire, Sir Godfrey telling us some story of his life abroad, and Lady Maud standing to listen, her elbow resting on the low marble chimney-piece, — it seemed to me that the "white garden-lily" looked like that flower when the sun comes by and shines upon it, making

it not only pure but thoroughly translucent with beauty and delight.

I wonder, did any one else see her with my eyes?

This morning, after breakfast, Sir Godfrey Redwood asked me to walk with him, that he might show me the conservatories; and there, sitting down under a fair orange-tree, with the sun shining in upon all sorts of gorgeous flowers he has brought home from abroad, he talked with me long and seriously of the future — of my brother's future.

He says, that he intends entering public life under the new ministry, and that Harry, now more than twenty years old, shall be his secretary, or have a government appointment, as may be. The boy is able and willing to carve out his own fortunes now; and will be placed where he need not dread that one word — which Sir Godfrey never uses — *patronage*. He will be independent, too, though not rich; and, as I said, Henry and I between us can give Aleck what he desires — a college-education, to fit him for the Church; so that, in every way, the path before us is straight.

And here came in Sir Godfrey's generosity, which I can hardly think of without tears.

He asked me about my health, — if I were happy, — if I should not be lonely when Aleck was

at Cambridge, — and if, as my younger brother's college expenses could easily be managed, (ah! I knew how!) I would consent to give up teaching, and, just till Harry wanted me to keep his house, settle in a pretty little cottage there was near Redwood Hall? He said all this with some confusion and hesitation; but, — let me quite assure myself of that fact, — only the hesitation of a delicate generosity, to which the mere act of seeming to bestow favours is a pain.

For me, if I were somewhat agitated, he would easily attribute it to a similar cause.

I answered, that I had always lived independent, and wished it to be so to the end; — that it was much better I should still remain a governess. Only, as I had rather be with those I loved than with strangers, perhaps he would use his influence that I might stay permanently with little Lady Anne.

When I said "use his influence," he half smiled; then looked sad, and said gravely, that he had no influence in the Airlie family except as an ordinary friend.

(Then, things are not yet quite as I imagined!) Sir Godfrey, after a pause, continued the conversation. With true delicacy, he did not oppose my wish; and I shall still earn my own bread honourably and usefully. It is far the best: an idle life

would kill me. Work, constant work, is the sustainer, cheerer, and physician of the soul.

But that fact alters not the noble kindness of this most noble man, kindness of which I can hardly write or speak, but which I shall remember while I live.

After our talk we joined the others, until I came up softly into my own room, to be quiet and rest.

Henry provided for, placed where his career through life lies, humanly speaking, in his own hands; Aleck given his heart's desire: — how happy my two boys will be! And how thankful, solemnly and deeply thankful, am I!

Sitting at my little Gothic window, I can see him, — I mean Sir Godfrey, — walking on the lawn, with Lady Dorothy and little Lady Anne. How happy he looks; happy as a man must be who diffuses happiness wherever he sets his foot. Such a man I knew he would become! God bless him — God evermore bless him! And what does it signify how far off one stands from great treasures, eternally set aside, when one knows of a certainty that the gold has not become dim, that the fine gold will never change!

“Bonnie Ladie Ann” comes this instant bounding in at my door, discomposing all my thoughts.

She is a thorough little elf of mischief; nobody would ever dream she was an earl's daughter. Nothing will serve her now but that I must come into the chestnut-alley, where Sir Godfrey has had put up for her a most aerial and magnificent swing; where, moreover, he is actually going to swing her himself, and the merry, frolicsome Lady Dorothy too. They say I must go, if only to play propriety among such madcaps.

So I must just finish my journal in the afternoon.

* * * * *

"In the afternoon" — these are the last words I find written down in the journal so long put aside.

Since then, many, many afternoons — many days, weeks, months — have gone by; and out of it all I wake, as out of a night-mare dream, to live the remainder of my life — how? — God knoweth!

I think it will do me good to write down a plain account of the strange things which happened, beginning from that moment — which the sight of

these pages causes to seem fresh as yesterday, — when I laid them safely by, the ink scarce dry, took the little child's hand, and, almost as gay as a child myself, ran with Lady Anne to the chestnut alley.

I had always a great love for the sight of chestnut trees in spring. These were very beautiful — great towering pyramids of soft green, for they had not yet come into flower. I remember Sir Godfrey showed me a bud, and reminded me of my once saying, in my girlish nonsense, that if ever I owned a park, I would plant it all over with horse-chestnut trees. At which both I and they all laughed, — we were merry enough to laugh at every thing. For me, it seemed as if a spell were over me, some sunny reflex from my former days. Once I quite started at the sound of my own mirth; nay, even Sir Godfrey Redwood turned round, and said cordially and merrily, "Why, that's right! You are laughing just like Felicia Lyne."

From this strange excitement I can only account for my doing — what in a staid old maid and a governess might seem rather out of place, — namely, that I joined in the frolic, and suffered myself to be persuaded to take my turn with Lady Dorothy and Lady Anne in the swinging, an amusement of which in my girlish days I used to be passionately fond.

It made all those girlish days come back again: I can feel it now — the wild delight of flying through the air, every minute higher and more daring, touching the leaves of lofty boughs, which nothing touched but the birds; sweeping backwards — forwards — with my bonnet falling off, and my hair dropping over my face; hearing Lady Dorothy clap her hands, and little Lady Anne scream with delight. Even Sir Godfrey, forgetting himself, cried “Bravo, Felicia!” entering into the scene with all the excitement of a boy.

I remember, too, that he said something about “swinging me straight, on account of the tree” — an old withered trunk that stood near, rather in the way; and that I laughed at the notion of danger, when *he* was there.

So I was dashed on from height to dizzy height, his great strength urging me forward, till once, when his hand was on the rope, little Lady Anne cried out suddenly —

“There’s Maud!”

I felt the swing sweep forward aslant, then a heavy crushing blow — darkness — and no more

* * * * *

When many hours, nay, days, afterwards, my right senses came into me again, I awoke to the knowledge, kept from me for a long time, yet

gradually revealed, that I should be disfigured and crippled for life.

The only balm to this misfortune, was the consciousness *whose* hand had unwittingly caused it all.

(Writing this sentence, and confessing this thought, I feel to be selfish; yet it was true.)

I believe Sir Godfrey Redwood was for many days almost out of his mind with grief. *He* could not feel what I did — that any thing coming from him, was to me far less bitter than had it come from any one else. And, as even my two poor distracted boys must have seen at once, and did see, — the whole circumstance was so entirely an accident.

Of course, I cannot recollect any thing of the time when my life was in danger; and every one has appeared reluctant to speak of it to me afterwards. Only, as I now and then hear, it was a terrible time to them all. It seems very strange to think of the Redwoods and Airlies hanging, as it were, on my breath — such a frail, useless breath as mine.

. . . I write this account in pauses, as my strength is still not great. * * * *

It is always painful to dwell on sickness; and

in this mournful world we ought never to give to ourselves or others a single unnecessary pain. I shall quite pass over my long illness; out of which I woke, and found the harvest ripened, and the reapers reaping, around Redwood Hall.

It was exactly like wakening into a new world. Only, *not* that world into which, I pray God, I may one day awake, to be, instead of what I am now, evermore beautiful, active, and full of joy.

The first time I quitted my room was quite a triumphal procession; for all the Ladies Airlie had come down from London to see me: indeed, Lady Maud had been more or less at Redwood Hall the whole time. Sir Godfrey's public duties kept him much from home, which was a blessing: it must have been great torture to him, to come back while I was miserably lying there. They would not let me see him all the while.

Therefore, our first interview occurred when I was comparatively well. I was alone when he came in, — he had begged that it might be so, — and — but my heart fails me when I recollect those two hours.

“Forgiveness!” — forgiveness from me! That, looking in my face, which much suffering must have changed considerably and doubtless made quite old, he should have burst into such uncontrollable agony!

That he should have kissed my poor, thin right-hand, — the only one he could kiss, — and that I should have laid it on his head, — his noble head! — telling him I was quite happy and regretted nothing, except that I could no longer be a governess.

He seemed to shudder at the word, and passionately assured me that I should never want any thing his whole fortune could bestow, — that his own sister should not be more honoured, or regarded more tenderly than I.

— I am quite sure, and was then, that the word "*sister*" burst from him instinctively, as being the very impulse and echo of his thoughts. It was well that I noted this, otherwise, from the passionate emotion of his whole manner under the agony of such a time, I might, as has happened often to weak women, have been somewhat led astray, so as to form erroneous conclusions.

Afterwards, when he had become more himself, and his mother and Lady Dorothy had joined us, he insisted on taking Harry's place, and carrying me into the other drawing-room. I could say nothing, being very much exhausted. And so it happened, that while he was holding me, I fainted in his arms. I believe, for half an hour, they all thought I was dead; I wish — but no! I will not utter that sinful longing.

After I had recovered, I was left to sleep; ay, and did sleep, heavily too, for a long time.

Waking at length, it was to an atmosphere of such twilight dimness and silence, that I hardly recognized my own room. My brain must still have been somewhat confused, as I remember thinking I was really dead, and lying quite still and motionless, like a corpse, until gradually I gathered up my ideas.

The white curtains were closely drawn, so that I could see nothing; but I began to distinguish a soft sound of talking, and to recollect that I had gone to sleep, with those two kind girls — in whom it was the least of their nobility that they were an earl's daughters — sitting by my bedside.

Lady Dorothy was speaking in a whisper, but still with that strong energy which, as in all impulsive characters, continually gleamed through her mirth.

"I tell you, Maud, as I told him this day, *he ought.*"

"If '*he ought*,' and thinks so himself, Sir Godfrey will probably do it: he always does what is right," was the answer, very slow and quiet, even for Lady Maud.

"It would be right; it is what a generous man

ought to do; it is the only reparation he can make her. I told him so."

"And what did he say?"

"Nothing! he seemed shocked, — stunned, as if he had never thought of it before. Yet it is not such a wonderful thing. If her health returns, even lame as she is, and will be always, he might have a worse wife than Felicia Lyne."

"Hush! softer!"

But the caution was too late; I heard all clearly now: for which, most earnestly I now thank God!

"So you think," said Maud tremulously, — "so you really think she cared for him? He once confessed that, long ago, when he was quite a boy, he was half in love with *her*. And any one whom he loved or who loved him — Yes; I am glad you told him he ought to marry her."

Then again fell around me the silence — the twilight gloom — almost like that of the grave; but crossed by floating shadows as of another world.

In the midst of it, I heard Lady Maud softly rise, and go out; and then I called to Lady Dorothy, said I had wakened feeling much better, and bade her go downstairs.

Next morning I heard accidentally that Sir Godfrey Redwood had been obliged to leave hastily for town. I do not know any thing more that passed

in the household: all things to me seemed a strange, dizzy dream; and I noticed no one but Lady Maud.

The "white lily" never bent nor drooped; but looked wan-like, as though in the coming shadow of its life's first storm.

Two or three days after then, when I was beginning to feel myself again, I received a letter from Sir Godfrey Redwood. It contained an offer of his hand.

All in it was said nobly, frankly, truly. He told me, — what I was glad to know, — that he *had* loved me, boyish-fashion, for a little while, until circumstances made our paths so different; and a man cannot live upon a dream, as sometimes women do. He made no allusion to my loving him, or his loving me, now; but merely offered me his hand, with the promise of spending his whole life in honouring me and in securing my happiness.

My happiness! As if I would have accepted a whole life-time of joy, did it cost him one sacrifice, one regret!

I answered his letter, saying, not untruly, that I had long given up all thoughts of marrying; and that it would be much better for us both that he should still hold me, in the words he had lately used, as his "sister." There was no need to say any more.

In so doing I took counsel of no one, told no one, except Lady Maud. To her I mentioned the mere facts of his letter and of mine, that she might know how nobly he had acted. She listened quite silently, as she sat by my bedside, only I saw, for one of the few times in her life, her falling tears: then she left me to sleep. I did not sleep, but lay all night quiet and happy, happier than for many years, thinking a little of this world, but more of the world to come, — of my mother, — and of God.

The next day Sir Godfrey Redwood wrote me a long, affectionate, brother-like letter, pledging himself to that affection which I desire to keep, and believe I shall keep, to my dying hour.

— The day after that, he came home. Lady Maud and my two brothers were with me when he entered. He met me with cordial tenderness and joy, and when his eye fell upon the "white lily" —

I need not say more, but that *that* happened which was sure and right to happen; — ere the

week ended, we all knew that there would be at last a Lady Redwood of Redwood Hall.

I have thus told all that has happened within this year, which has now circled round to its close.

In the early spring, Lady Maud Airlie will become Sir Godfrey's wife; and Mrs. Redwood will necessarily form a new establishment. She has asked me to come and live with her, at all events for a year or two; but I had rather go home — to the quiet and comparatively humble home made for me by my dear Harry. I cannot tell clearly how things are settled, as since I have been ill, he and Sir Godfrey do with me as they please. I only know that Harry says, "Sister, come home;" I shall go to him, and be at rest.

With this year begins a new life, if indeed I live, as the physicians say I may, — and as I would desire, though from one only reason, that my living on for a few years longer might save from pain him with whom my death would leave a continual pang. But, in any case, I shall write my journal no more.

* * * * *

"No more!" — Well! a resolution kept for fifteen years may be considered sufficiently strong; and so now, having all but crossed the half-century of existence, I may be at liberty to finish my journal.

I don't think, though, that I ever shall find time to finish it. All the day I am as busy as busy can be; and besides, how can one write with the nursery overhead, and hearing through the ceiling the pattering feet of such a host of little Lynes? If Auntie cannot run about the house, they can, goodness knows! The mamma of them had need to be the sensible, energetic woman she is — Mrs. Henry Trevethlan Lyne!

I wrote down once, in strange foreboding, the old heathen apothegm, "No man can be called truly happy until he dies." I add to it now the Christian saying, "No man can be called truly *unhappy* until he dies." That is, so long as God gives life, He also gives the possibility of enduring and even enjoying it.

I did not learn to think so all at once, and even now I have occasional fits of depression, hard enough to bear; but my abiding sense is that of great peace, cheerfulness, and thankfulness. Some people even go the length of calling the little sitting-room, where of necessity I am much confined, the "Bird's Nest,"

from its being an atmosphere so cheery, pleasant, and warm. — Of which title I, the owner bird, am mightily proud.

It was some years before I regained the use of my left arm; and even now I can scarcely manage to walk. But my darling Harry was to me from the first as “feet to the lame;” and since he married, I have gradually gained six pairs of little trotters, all at my service from morning till night: so I sit in as lazy state as an eastern empress.

Only, at intervals, finding it impossible to be idle, I give up “the empress,” and turn once more governess, quite in amateur fashion, with no other salary than kisses. With this excuse, I gather into my bird’s nest whole flocks of young folk, not only our own tribe, but those of other people. In this way there came to me last week, as they do not seldom, the little Godfrey and Anne Redwood. I think, after all, I love those two children best!

Lady Dorothy — poor and portionless as she was — has gained a strawberry-leaf coronet; but “little Lady Anne” is still Lady Anne Airlie. Time enough! — and except that such a climax would be quite too romantic, save in a story — I have now and then vague notions that when Aleck gets — what Sir Godfrey Redwood tells me he is quite sure

of ere long, we might possibly hear of "the Dean of So-and-so and Lady Anne Lyne."

Mentioning Sir Godfrey's name, I can but add to it — what all the world adds — a blessing. May that blessing follow him, as such a noble man deserves, to his life's end!

I have no more to say.

GOVERNESSES'

BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION.

"There is so much pleasure in conferring kindness, that it has always seemed to me an exceeding indulgence of God to command that as a duty, which is in truth one of our highest enjoyments."

BISHOP HEBER.

As this little book is one of the hallowed offerings laid by Genius on the shrine of Benevolence, it may not be uninteresting to state briefly a few particulars of the Institution for which it has been so kindly written.

The necessity for such a Society was evident, long before any active measures were taken for its establishment; and its first royal patron, the late Duke of Cambridge, in taking the chair at the first Public Meeting, May 25, 1843, expressed his astonishment that such a work had then to be *begun*. It did, indeed, seem strange and sad, that ladies, usually well born and always well educated, to whom parents entrusted their dearest treasures — the setting of their richest jewels — ladies, who were considered

unfit for their position, unless possessed of cultivated minds, refined manners, pure morals and sound religious principles, should yet, if unable to make a provision against the time of age, or sickness, have no resource to which they had a RIGHT to apply, no assistance *as a class*, which almost every other class received from public feeling and consideration. The design then laid before the public met with ready and generous co-operation. In the very first Report, six hundred names were enrolled as its supporters; and since that time the list has swelled to as many thousands; and we listen with confidence to the prophetic teaching of Hope and Experience, who "bear a glass that shows us many more."

After nine years' devotion to the cause, having known the daily and the hidden life of hundreds, we might say of thousands, the name GOVERNESS has become to us a claim at once on our esteem, our respect, and our sympathy. It implies to us the willing resignation of all the happiness of home, yet a steady self-forgetfulness for the sake of the dear ones left there — a fulfilment of the highest duties, without any of the rewards which men can earn by ambition and perseverance; and, too often, the picture closes with an old age of silent privation; infirm, with no fond child to aid; chilled, yet dreading to expend another sixpence on firing; suffering the daily martyrdom of the scanty meal, the nightly torture of the hard bed. Oh! little do they imagine,

who heap soft cushions round some cherished parent, and tempt the failing appetite with anxious care, little can they fancy of the struggles which we SEE and KNOW!

The first branch carried out in the Society's operations, [and commenced, indeed, within six weeks of this meeting,] was that of giving Temporary Assistance to Governesses, by a Committee of Ladies, to help them over times of difficulty or distress. There is no small evidence of the urgent need of such an Institution in the fact, that about A THOUSAND ladies have applied for aid. The widowed mother, unable from her governess-earnings to clothe the governess-daughter for her first situation; — the daughter, unable to resume her duties, because unable to leave the sick bed of her dying mother; — the invalid, so weakened by illness and despondency, that no cordial less potent than hope and sympathy could raise her sinking frame; — the bereaved daughter, silently sorrowing in the midst of her daily duties for the beloved father, to whose memory she had no means of paying the customary respect by assuming the customary mourning; — the fond, patient sister, tending unweariedly the infirmities in another which she felt fast creeping on herself and withering the energies on which *both* depended; — all these and many more have asked and had help — help given far more readily than asked. In these nine years about six thousand pounds have been thus devoted;

a large sum, and yet how small as compared with the number of applicants for it! Often and often have the ladies of the Committee sorrowing over some new tale of sad suffering, coupled the gift with the assurance, that they "would give more, but that their hand lacked means."

Next followed, as the natural and necessary consequence of the scenes of hitherto unknown distress thus laid open, amongst which was too often found aged and helpless penury, permanent Annuities to Governesses who had attained to more than fifty years of age, — the *two* score and ten, after which the working governess too surely finds all is but hopeless labour and increasing sorrow; her willingness for exertion as strong as ever, her power daily becoming less. Two hundred and thirty-two ladies have already been candidates at sixteen successive elections, and one-third of that number have been provided for. Annuities have been founded to the utmost limits of the amount, that can be granted from VESTED CAPITAL.

There are at this moment forty-nine in the enjoyment of small, but certain, incomes, amounting in the aggregate to more than nine hundred pounds a year, arising, let us repeat once more, from VESTED CAPITAL; and, therefore subject to no alteration. Still, at the last election, one hundred and fourteen were unsuccessful! The anxiety, the eagerness, with which the four prizes of twenty pounds a year were

sought, were most sad to witness; but we turn our eyes hopefully to the future, to the foundation of more Annuities as more capital is acquired, and to the beneficial results of the third branch of the Society's efforts, the Provident Fund.

We have already alluded to the undeserved, nay, the honourable poverty, caused by the self-forgetfulness of filial, or sisterly affection; few governesses can save much, some can save nothing; but there has been much distress amongst this and, indeed, every class of ladies from an ignorance of business, and of the manner in which to invest the money they may possess. The Society invites all governesses, who are now earning, to provide for the time when rest will be needful; and undertakes all the expense and trouble of passing their money into the hands of Government, in each lady's own name, as her own separate and individual property, to purchase an annuity for her old age. In nine years nearly eight hundred have adopted this wise course, and Government now holds about ninety thousand pounds in trust for them.

A Savings' Bank has been wisely added for smaller savings; too small to invest, perhaps, but not too small to save, if future independence be the great goal to arrive at. "'Tis but is a most dangerous thing," says Miss Edgeworth. "'Tis but a guinea! 'Tis but a few shillings. How many guineas in one year may be spent upon 'Tis but!" Oh, that all

would remember, how many guineas in one year may be saved by heeding the wise warning here so well enforced!

Six years ago a fourth branch was commenced, by the purchase of a house in Harley Street; and arrangements made to fit it for the accommodation of twenty-five ladies in the intervals of their engagements, always a period of sad and anxious suspense. It was intended not only to insure the respectability of each lady's temporary home, and to save her from the ruinous expense of ordinary board and lodging, but to exchange its sad solitariness for the cheerful society of fellow-travellers on the same road. The sanguine hopes with which it was opened, have been more than realized. It has emphatically deserved its name, and been gratefully acknowledged as such by more than a thousand ladies.

It is impossible to express too strongly the cheering effect it has had upon the profession. When obliged to leave a situation in the country, instead of looking drearily forward to a lodging, chosen rather for its cheapness than for its comforts; and to solitary evenings, following too often on days of fatigue and disappointment; the governess knows now, that she has only to apply to be received here into a family ruled by the mild laws of impartial kindness; where her interests will be as much promoted as her happiness.

Often and often have we seen, at the door, a

face full of affection; some young lady who had once sojourned there, — had experienced the cheerfulness, the cordiality, the sympathy, that all experience there, — and now, passing through town with the family of her pupils, had asked for a holiday, to spend it at the Home.

The ground-floor is devoted during the day to the purposes of Registration, to give ladies seeking governesses, and ladies seeking situations, a mutual and entirely free opportunity of meeting with their respective requirements; and, in this manner, out of the eight thousand and eighty-nine who, to the end of last year, had entered their names on the Society's books, on the one only condition of producing evidence of respectability, four thousand eight hundred and eighty-four have found situations, with no entrance fee for registering, no per-centage on their first year's salary. Could we justly calculate and appropriate the amount thus saved to governesses as a class, how many more Annuities might be founded! But there is, again, as we hope, another means to prevent that poverty for which the Annuities must ever be but an insufficient remedy.

We will pass lightly over the College, because it has been greatly doubted how far it formed a legitimate branch of a Benevolent Institution; and, at least, it is not so individual a benefit, as it aids little the governess who is now in the exercise of her vocation; and, while it 'proposes to fit for their

work those who will hereafter follow in her path, it holds out the same advantages of a less expensive and, perhaps, more extended education to those who, by their station in society, may be supposed to be independent of such assistance. Ladies of all ranks have brought their daughters to the classes; and the free pupils [four in each year being free from payment, because in some way dependent on some governess-relative] take their place beside those who little imagine how possible it is that their flowery paths may, by some sudden storm, be rendered the same dull road of steady duty; how possible that they may have life-long cause to be thankful that they were educated as governesses.

We have reached now the last scene of this brief history; the last earthly resting-place of the tired travellers in a rugged journey; the Asylum in Kentish Town, built expressly for the Aged, erected and opened nearly three years since; the calm haven, where no tempest may reach them, but all, undistracted by the tossing of worldly cares, may quietly lay hold of and rest upon "the hope set before us," that "anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast."

A beautiful and touching consideration it is, that one house now shelters those who have trodden so many different paths of their one appointed road — gives peace and comfort to the evening of those who have borne the burden and heat of many days,

and affords them time for undisturbed thought over the events and actions of long past years, and of examining into and making sure of their hope for the future!

Little does it seem to signify in old age, whether the road travelled has been smooth, or stony; whether passed in happy companionship, or in strong self-reliance; in sunshine, or beneath an often-clouded sky; in health, or in sickness; in pleasure, or in pain. Nothing is left now, but its memories, AND ITS RESULTS. Many now, doubtless, bless the Wisdom that dashed the cup of happiness from their youthful lips, — that denied to them the leisure and the recreation they often longed for, — that hedged in their path by severe and continuous duties, — that taught them to feel that this was not their rest!

"To feel, although no tongue can prove,
That every cloud that spreads above
And veileth love, itself is Love."

Beautiful and touching, too, it is to witness the visit of some former pupil, — the happy importance of showing the house, and especially the one peculiar little room ("*our* house," but "*my* room"), and the affectionate respect, with which all is heard; the real gladness with which every comfort is observed.

Beautiful and touching is it, also, to see them gathering in the house of God; aged faces beaming with unutterable peace, aged voices gently joining in

the words of prayer and praise; to see them kneeling, side by side, at the table of the Lord — strangers a short while since, but now, as one family, partaking together of the means of grace, rejoicing together in in the hope of glory!

A blessed privilege it is to help to build this pleasant, peaceful home; to feel that we are raising a retreat for much-tried and care-worn hearts, a porch to those "many mansions," where there is room for ALL!

"HOW FULL OF DREAD, HOW FULL OF HOPE,
LOOMETH INEVITABLE DEATH:

OF DREAD, FOR ALL HAVE SINNED; OF HOPE,
FOR ONE HATH SAVED:

THE DREAD IS LOST IN JOY: THE HOPE IS
FILLED WITH IMMORTALITY!"

M. E. L.

March 17, 1852.

END OF BREAD UPON THE WATERS.

A FAMILY IN LOVE.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

A FAMILY IN LOVE

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

A FAMILY IN LOVE.

THIS is the age of complainings. Nobody suffers in silence; nobody breaks his or her heart in secrecy and solitude: they all take "the public" into their confidence — the convenient public, which, like murder,

Hath no tongue, but speaks
With most miraculous organ.

Of course it is neither the confider's fault nor yet the confidant's, if the winds sometimes whisper that King Midas has asses' ears.

Mine is no such confession. I have no gossip to retail of my neighbours: I am a very quiet gentleman, who prefer confining my interests and observations to my own household, my own immediate family. Ay, there lies my inevitable grief, there lurks my secret wrong; I am the unhappy elder brother of a family in love.

The fact dimly dawned upon me, widening by degrees, ever since I came home from India last year, and took upon myself the charge of my five

sisters, aged from about — But Martha might object to my particularising. Good little Patty! what a merry creature she was when she went nutting and fishing with me. And what ugly caps she has taken to wearing, poor dear! And why can't she speak as gently when scolding the servants, as I remember our sweet-voiced, pretty mother used always to do? And why, in spite of their mutual position, will she persist in calling Mr. Green, with a kind of frigid solemnity, "Mr. Green?" But he does not seem to mind it: probably he never was called anything else.

He is a very worthy person, nevertheless, and I have a great respect for him. When my sister Martha — Miss Heathcote, as she has been called from her cradle — by letter announced to me at Madras that she intended to relinquish that title for the far less euphonious one of Mrs. Green, I was, to say the least of it, surprised. I had thought, for various reasons (of no moment now), that my eldest sister was not likely to marry — I rather hoped she would not. We might have been so comfortable, poor Patty and I. However, I had no business to interfere with either her happiness or her destiny; so when, the first Sunday after my arrival at home, a cozy carriage drove up the avenue, and a bald, rather stout little man got out, to be solemnly intro-

duced to me as "Mr. Green" I submitted to the force of circumstances, and to the duties of a brother-in-law.

He has dined with us every Sunday since. He and I are capital friends; regularly, when the ladies retire, he informs me what the Funds have been at, day by day during the past week, and which is the safest railway to buy shares in for the week following. A most worthy person, I repeat; will make a kind husband, and I suppose Martha likes him; but—. However, poor girl, she is old enough to judge for herself, and it is no business of mine. Some time, before long, I shall give her away at the old parish church — quietly, without any show; I shall see her walk down the church-aisle with old Mr. Green — he in his best white waistcoat, and she in her sober gray poplin, which she insists on being married in — not the clear soft muslin and long lace veil I quite well remember seeing Patty working at and blushing over, we won't say how many years ago. Well, women are better married, they say; but I think I would rather have had Martha an old maid.

My second sister, Angeline, was fifteen when I left England; and the very loveliest creature I ever beheld. Everybody knew it, everybody acknowledged it. She could not walk down the street with-

out people turning to look after her; she could not enter a room without creating a general whisper: "Who is she?" — The same thing continued as she grew up to womanhood. All the world was at her feet; everyone said she would make a splendid marriage — become a countess at least; and I do believe Angeline herself had the fullest confidence in that probability. She refused lovers by the dozen; every letter I got told me of some new slaughter of Miss Angeline's. I would have pitied the poor fellows, only she was such a dazzling beauty, and no man falls out of love so safely as a man who falls in love with a beauty. I never heard that anybody died either by consumption, cord, or pistol, through the cruelty of my sister Angeline.

But, like most cruel damsels, she paid the penalty of her hard-heartedness; when I came home I found Angeline Heathcote, Angeline Heathcote still. Beautiful yet, beautiful exceedingly; a walking picture, a visible poem: it was a real pleasure to me to have such a handsome creature about the house. Though people did say, with a mysterious shake of the head, that, handsome as she was, if I had only seen my sister two or three years ago! And Angeline herself became tenacious on the subject of new gowns, and did not like it to be generally known whether she or Charlotte was the elder. Good, plain, merry

Charlotte, who never thought about either her looks or her age!

Yet Charlotte was the first who brought me into trouble — that trouble which I am now called upon to bemoan. I had not been at home three months, when there came a young gentleman — a very lively and pleasant young gentleman, too — who sang duets with the younger girls, and made himself quite at home in my family circle. I myself did not much meddle with him, thought him a good-natured lad, and no more — until one fine morning he astonished me by requesting five minutes' conversation with me in my study. (Alas! such misfortunes come not singly — my study has never been safe from similar applications and conversations since.)

I was very kind to the young man; when he blushed, I looked another way; when he trembled, I invited him to take a chair. I listened to his stammering explanations with the utmost patience and sympathy; I even tried to help him out with them — till he came to the last clause.

Now, I do say that a man who asks you for your purse, your horse, your friendship, after only four weeks' acquaintance, has considerable courage; but a man who, after that brief period since his introduction, comes and asks you for your *sister*

— why, one's first impulse is to kick him down stairs.

Happily, I controlled myself. I called to mind that Mr. Cuthbert was a very honest young fellow, and that if he did choose to risk his whole future upon the result of a month's laughing, and singing, and dancing at balls — certainly it was his affair, not mine. My business solely related to Charlotte. I was just despatching it in the quickest and friendliest manner, by advising the young fellow to go back to college and not make a fool of himself in vain, when he informed me that my consent only was required, since he and Charlotte had been a plighted couple for the space of three whole days!

I have always held certain crotchets on the paramount rights of lovers, and the wrong of interfering with any apparently sincere vows; so I sent for Lotty — talked with her; found she was just as foolish as he. That because he was the best waltzer, the sweetest tenor singer, and had the handsomest moustache she knew — our lively Charlotte was quite contented to dance through life with Mr. Cuthbert, and decidedly proud of having his diamond ring on her third finger, and being considered "engaged" — as indeed they were likely to remain, if their minds changed not, for the next ten years.

So, what could I do? — Nothing but deal with

the young simpletons — if such they were — according to their folly. If true, their love would have time to prove itself such; if false they would best find out that fact by its not being thwarted. I kissed away Lotty's tears, silly child! and next Sunday I had the honour of carving for brother-in-law elect Nr. 2.

It never rains but it pours. Whether Angeline was roused at once to indignation and condescension by Charlotte's engagement — which she was the loudest in inveighing against — or whether, as was afterwards reported to me, she was influenced by a certain statistical newspaper paragraph, maliciously read aloud by Mr. Cuthbert for general edification, that women's chances of matrimony were proved by the late census to diminish greatly between the ages of thirty and thirty-five; but most assuredly Angeline's demeanour changed. She stooped to be agreeable as well as beautiful. To more than one suitor whom she had of old swept haughtily by, did she now graciously incline; and the result was — partly owing to the gaieties of this autumn's election — that Miss Angeline Heathcote, the beauty of the county, held a general election on her own private account.

Alas for me! In one week I had no less than four hopeful candidates requesting "the honour of an interview" in my study.

Angeline's decision was rather dilatory — they were all such excellent matches; and, poor girl — with her beauty for her chief gift, and with all the tinsel adoration it brought her — she had never been used to think of marriage as anything more than a mere wordly arrangement. She was ready to choose a husband as she would a wedding-gown — dispassionately, carefully, as the best out of a large selection of articles, each rich and good in its way, and warranted to wear. She had plenty of common sense, and an acute judgment; as for her heart —

“You see, Nigel,” she said to me, when weighing the respective claims and merits of Mr. Archer and Sir Rowland Griffith Jones — “you see, I never was sentimentally inclined. I want to be married. I think I should be better married than single. Of course, my husband must be a good man; also, he should be a wealthy man; because — well! — because I rather like show and splendour: they suit me.”

And she glanced into the mirror at something which, certainly, if any woman has any excuse for the vanities of life, might have pleaded Angeline's.

“But,” I argued — half sorrowfully, as when you see an ignorant child throwing gold away, and choosing sham jewels for their pitiful glistening,

"you surely would think it necessary to love your husband?"

"O yes; and I like Sir Rowland extremely — perhaps even better than Mr. Archer — though *he* has been fond of me so long, poor fellow! But he will get over it — all men do."

So, though the balance hung for a whole week doubtful — Heaven forgive the girl! but true love was not in her nature, and how can people see further than their lights go? — I was soon pretty certain that fate would decide the marriage-question in favour of the baronet. As Lotty said, Angeline would look magnificent in the family diamonds as Lady Griffith Jones.

The Welsh cause triumphed; Mr. Archer quitted the field. He had been an old acquaintance; but — what was that to Sir Rowland and 10,000*l.* a-year?

After Angeline's affair was settled, there came a lull in the family epidemic — possibly because the head of the family grew savage as a bear, and for a full month his spirit hugged itself into fierce misanthropy, or rather misogyny, contemning the whole female sex, especially such as contemplated, or were contemplated in, the *unholy* estate of matrimony.

No wonder! I could not find peace in my own

house; I had not my own sisters' society; not a single family fireside evening could I get from week's end to week's end; not a room could I enter without breaking in on some tête-à-tête; not a corner could I creep into without stumbling upon a pair of lovers. For a little while these fond couples kept on their good behaviour towards me — preserved a degree of reserve towards each other out of respect to the head of the house, the elder brother; but gradually it deteriorated — ceased. Nay, I, who belong to the old generation — which was foolish enough to deem caresses hallowed things, that the mere pressure of a beloved woman's hand, not to speak of her sacred mouth, was a thing not to be made a public show of — never to be thought of without a tender reverence, a delicious fear — I, Nigel Heathcote, have actually seen two young men, strangers a little year ago, kiss my two sisters openly before their whole family — before their brother's very face!

My situation became intolerable. I fled the fireside; I took refuge in my study. Wo betide the next lover who should assail me there!

Surely that fatality would not again arrive for some time. When the elder ones were once married and away, surely I, and Constantia, and little Lizzie, might live a few years in fraternal peace, unmo-

lest by the haunting shadow of impending matrimony.

It occurred to me that in the interval of the weddings I would send for an old friend, a bachelor like myself — an honest manly fellow, who worked hard from circuit to circuit, and got barely one brief a-year. Yes, Will Launceston would keep me company; and we would spend our days in the woods, and our evenings in my study, safe out of the way of lovers, weddings, and womankind.

I had just written to him, when my sister Martha came in with a very serious face, and told me “she wished for a little conversation with me.”

Ominous beginning! But she was not a young man, and could not well attack me concerning any more of my sisters. At least so I congratulated myself — alas, too soon!

My sister settled herself by the fire with a serious countenance.

“My dear Nigel.”

“My dear Martha.”

“I wish to consult you on a matter which has recently come to my knowledge, and has given me much pain, and some anxiety.”

“Indeed!” and I am afraid my tone was less sympathising than eager, since from her troubled

nervous manner, I thought — I hoped, the matter in question indicated the secession of Mr. Green. "Go on. Is it about" — I stopped and corrected myself hypocritically — "about the girls?"

She assented.

"Whew!" — a disappointed whistle, faint and low. "Still, go on. I'll listen to anything except another proposal."

Martha shook her head. "Alas, I fear it will never come to that! Brother, have you noticed? — but men never do — still, I myself have observed a great change in Constantia lately."

"Now, Constantia always was different from the other girls — liked solitude and books, talked little, and had a trick of reverie. In short, was what young people called "interesting" and old people "romantic" — the sort of creature who, did she grow up a remarkable woman, would have her youthful peculiarities carefully and respectfully noted, with "I always said there was a great deal in that girl;" but who, did she turn out nothing particular, would be laughed at, and probably would laugh at herself, for having been—"very sentimental when she was young." Nevertheless, having at one time of my life shared that imputation, I was tender over the little follies of Constantia.

"I think the girl reads too much, and sits with her eyes too wide open, Martha; — is rather unsocial, likewise. She wanted to get out of the way of the weddings, and positively refused to be Angeline's bridesmaid."

"Ah!" sighed Martha, "that's it. Poor foolish child, to think of falling in love" —

I almost jumped off my chair. "I'll not hear a word of it — I declare I will not! I'll keep the young fellow off my premises with man-traps and spring-guns. I'll go back to India if you tell me of another "engagement."

"No chance of that;" and Martha shook her head more drearily than ever. "Poor child, I fear it is an unfortunate attachment!"

I brightened up — so much so, that my sister looked, nay, gently hinted, her conviction that I was a "brute." She expected I would have been as sorry as she was!

"No, Martha; I am rather glad. Glad, after my experience of these 'fortunate' love-affairs, to find that one of my sisters has the womanly courage, unselfishness, and simplicity to conceive an 'unfortunate' attachment."

Perhaps this speech hurt Martha, and yet it need not. She and I both knew and respected one another's youth; and if we differed in opinion concern-

ing our middle age, why — I was as likely to be wrong as she.

She did not at first reply; and then, without comment, she explained to me her uneasiness about Constantia. The girl had long played confidante to Mr. Archer in the matter of Angeline, and, as often happens, the confidante had unwittingly taken too great interest in one of her principals, until she found herself envying the lot of the other. When Mr. Archer's dismissal finally broke off all his intercourse with our family, there was one of my sisters who missed him wearily, cruelly; and that was — not Angeline.

I was touched. Now, no doubt Constantia had been very foolish; no doubt she had nourished and encouraged this fancy, as romantic girls do, in moonlight walks and solitary dreams; hugging her pain, and deluding herself that it was bliss. Little doubt, likewise, that the feeling would wear itself out, or fade slowly away in life's stern truths; but at present it was a most sincere passion, sad and sore. Foolish and romantic as it might be, in itself and in its girlish demonstrations, I could not smile at it. It was a real thing, and as such to be respected.

Martha and I held counsel together, and acted on the result. We took Constantia under our

especial charge; we gave her books to read, visits to pay, work to do; keeping her as much as possible with one or other of us, and out of the way of the childish flirtation of Cuthbert and Charlotte, or the formal philandering of Sir Rowland and the future Lady Griffith Jones. And if sometimes, as Lizzie told me — my little Lizzie, who laughed at love and lovers with the lightness of sixteen — Constantia grew impatient with Lotty's careless trifling, and curled her lip scornfully when Angeline paraded the splendours of her *trousseau*, we tried to lead the girl's mind out of herself, and out of dreamland altogether, as much as possible,

“But suppose,” Lizzie sagely argued — “suppose, when Angeline is married, Mr. Archer should come back? He always liked Constantia extremely. Who knows but” —

I shook my head, and desired the little castle-builder to hold her tongue.

She was our sole sharer of the secret; and I must say, though she laughed at her now and then, Lizzie was extremely loving and patient with Constantia. After a time, we left the two girls wholly to one another, more especially as my time was now taken up with my friend Launceston.

O the comfort, the relief, of the society of a man! — a real honest man — who had some sterling

aim and object in life — some steady work to do — some earnest interest in the advance of the world, the duties and pursuits of his brother men: who was neither handsome, witty, nor accomplished; who rarely shone in ladies' society; in fact, rather eschewed it than otherwise. For, he said, nature had unfitted him to act the part of a mere admirer, and adverse fortune forbade him to appear in the character of a lover; so he held aloof, keeping his own company and that of one or two old friends like myself.

I was fond of Launceston; I wished my family to like him too; but they were all too busy about their own affairs. Evening after evening, I could not get any of my sisters to make tea for us, or give us a little music afterwards, except the pale, dull-looking Constantia, or my bonny rose of June, little Lizzie. At last, we four settled into a small daily company, and went out together, read together, talked together continually. I kept these two younger ones as much as possible in our unromantic practical society, that not only my mind, but Launceston's, in its thorough cheerfulness and healthiness of tone, might unconsciously have a good influence upon Constantia.

The girl's spirit slowly began to heal. She set aside her dreaming, and took with all the energy of

her nature to active work — women's work — charity school-teaching, village-visiting, and the like. She put a little too much "romance" into all she did still; but there was life in it, truth, sincerity.

"Miss Constantia will make an admirable lady-of-all-work," said Launceston in his quaint way, watching her with his kindly and observant eyes. "The world wants such. She will find enough to do."

And so she did: enough to steal her too from my side, almost as much as the three *fiancées*. The circle in my study dwindled gradually down to Lizzie, Launceston, and me.

We were excellent company still, we three. I had rarely had so much of my pet sister's society: I had never found it so pleasant. True, she was shyer than usual, probably from being with us two, older and wiser people — men likewise — but she listened to our wisdom so sweetly — she bore with our dry, long-worded learning so patiently — that my study never seemed itself unless I had the little girl seated at my feet, or sewing quietly in the window-corner. And then she was completely a "little girl;" had no forward ways — no love notions, or, ten times worse, marriage-notions, crossing her innocent brain. I felt sure I could take her

into my closest heart, form her mind and principles at my will, and one day make a noble woman of her, after the pattern of — But I never mention *that* sacred name.

I loved Lizzie — loved her to the core of my heart. Sometimes with fatherly more than even brotherly pride, I used to talk to Launceston of the child's sweetnesses, but he always gave me short answers. It was his way. His laconism in most things was really astonishing, for a man under thirty.

One day, when Angeline's grand wedding was safely over, and the house had sunk into a pathetic quietness that reminded one of the evening after a funeral — at least so I thought — Launceston and I fell into a discussion, which stirred him into more demonstrativeness than usual. The subject was men, women, and marriages.

"I am convinced," he said, "that I shall never marry."

It was not my first hearing of this laudable determination; so I let it pass, merely asking his reasons.

"Because my conscience, principles, and feelings go totally against the system of matrimony, as practised in the world, especially the world of woman-

kind. All the courting and proposing, the presents and the love-letters, the dinners to relatives and congratulations of friends, the marriage-guests and marriage-settlements, the white lace, white satin, and white favours, carriage, postilions, and all. Heigh-ho, Heathcote, what fools men are!"

I was just about to suggest the possibility of naming one, say two, wise individuals among our sex, when in stole a white fairy — my pretty Lizzie, in her bridesmaid's dress. Her presence changed the current of conversation; until from some remark she made about a message Angeline had left as to the proper way of inserting her marriage in the *Times* newspaper to-morrow, our talk imperceptibly fell back into the old channel.

"I, like you, Launceston, hate the whole system of love and marrying. It is one great sham. Beginning when miss, at school, learns that it is the apex of feminine honour to be a bride — the lowest deep of feminine humiliation to die an old maid. Continuing when she, a young lady at home, counts her numerous "offers;" taking pride in what ought to be to her a source either of regret or humiliation. Ending when, time slipping by, she drops into the usual belief that nobody ever marries her first love; so takes the best match she can find, and makes

marriage, which is merely the visible crown and completion of love, the pitiful dishonoured substitute for it. I declare solemnly, I have seen many a wife whom I held to be scarcely better than — no wife at all.”

I had forgotten my little sister's presence; but she did not seem to hear me — nor Launceston either, for that matter. His earnestness had softened down; he sat, very thoughtful, over against the window where Lizzie had taken her sewing. — What a pretty picture she made!

“Come here, my little girl,” I said; “I should not like thee to go the way of the world; and yet I should be satisfied to give thee away some day, quietly, in a white muslin gown and a straw-bonnet, to some honest man who loved thee — and was loved so well, that Lizzie would never dream of marrying any other, but would have been quite content, if need be, to live an old maid for his sake to the end of her days. That's what *I* call love — eh, my girl?”

Lizzie drooped her head, blushing deeply. Of course; girls always do.

Launceston said, in a tone so low that I quite started: “Then you do believe in true love, after all?”

“It would be ill for me, or for any human being — if I did not. And I believe in it the more earnestly because of its numberless counterfeits. Nay” — and now when, after this gay marriage-morning, the evening was sinking gray and dull, my mind inclined pensively, even tenderly, to the sister who had gone, the other two sisters who were shortly going away, from my hearth for ever — “nay, as since in the falsest creeds there lurks, I hope, a modicum of absolute truth, I would fain trust that in the poorest travesty or masquerade of love, one might find a fragment of the sterling commodity. Still, my Lizzie, dear, when all our brides are gone, let us congratulate ourselves that for a long time we shall have no more engagements.”

“You object to engagements?” said Lizzie, speaking timidly and downfaced — as I rather like to see a young girl speak on this subject.

“Why, how should you like it yourself, my little maid? To be loved, wooed, and wedded, in public, for the benefit of an amused circle of friends, neighbours, and connections. To have one’s actions noticed, one’s affairs canvassed, one’s feelings weighed and measured; to be congratulated, condoled, and jested with. Horrible! literally horrible. My wonder is that any true lovers can ever stand it.”

"Perhaps you are right," said Launceston, vehemently. "No man ought to place the girl he loves in such a position. Whatever it costs him, he ought to leave her free — altogether free — and offer her nothing until he can offer her his hand, at once, and with no delay."

"Bless my soul, Launceston, what are you in such excitement about? Has anybody been offering himself to *your* sister? Because — you mistook me. Ask her, or Lizzie, or any good woman, if they would feel flattered by a gentleman's acting in the way you suggest? As if his hand — with the ring in it — were everything to them, and himself and his true love nothing at all!"

Launceston laughed uneasily. "Well, but what did you mean? A — a friend of mine would like to know your opinion on this matter."

"My opinion is simply — an opinion. Every man is the best judge of his own affairs, especially love-affairs. As the Eastern proverb says: "Let not the lions decide for the tigers." But I think, did *I* love a woman" — (and it pleased me to know I was but speaking out *her* mind who years ago lived and died, in her fond simplicity wiser than any of these) — "did I love a woman, I would like to tell her so — just to herself, no more. I would like to

give her my love to rest on — to receive the help and consolation of hers. I would like her to feel that through all chances and changes she and I were *one*; one, neither for foolish child's-play nor head-long passion, but for mutual strength and support, holding ourselves responsible both to Heaven and each other for our life and our love. One, indissolubly, whether we were ever married or not; one in this world, and — we pray — one in the world everlasting."

Was I dreaming? Did I actually see my friend Launceston take, unforbidden, my youngest sister's hand, and hold it — firmly, tenderly, fast? Did I hear, with my own natural ears, Lizzie's soft little sob, not of grief certainly, as she slipped out of the room, as swift and silent as a moonbeam?

Eh! what? Good heavens! Was there ever any creature so blind as a middle-aged elder brother!

Well, as I told Launceston, it was half my own fault; and I must bear it stoically. Perhaps, on the whole, things might have been worse, for he is a noble fellow, and no wonder the child loves him. They cannot be married just yet — meanwhile, Lizzie and I keep the matter between ourselves. They are very happy — God bless them! and so am I.

*

*

*

P.S. — Mr. Archer reappeared yesterday — looking quite well and comfortable! I see clearly that, one day not distant, I shall be left lamenting — the solitary residuum of a Family in Love.

END OF A FAMILY IN LOVE.

A LOW MARRIAGE.

A NEW ARRIVAL

A LOW MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. ROCHDALE stood a good while talking at the school-gate this morning — Mrs. Rochdale, my mistress once, my friend now. My cousin, the village schoolmistress, was bemoaning over her lad George, now fighting in the Crimea, saying, poor body, “that no one could understand her feelings but a mother — a mother with an only son.”

Mrs. Rochdale smiled — that peculiar smile of one who has bought peace through the “constant anguish of patience” — a look which I can still trace in her face at times, and which I suppose will never wholly vanish thence. We changed the conversation, and she shortly afterwards departed.

— A mother with an only son. All the neighbourhood knew the story of our Mrs. Rochdale and *her* son. But it had long ceased to be discussed, at least openly; though still it was told under the seal of confidence to every new-comer in our village.

And still every summer I used to see any strangers who occupied my cousin's lodgings staring with all their eyes when the manor-house carriage passed by, or peeping from over the blinds to catch a glimpse of Mrs. Rochdale.

No wonder. She is, both to look at and to know, a woman among a thousand.

It can do no possible harm — it may do good — if I here write down her history.

First let me describe her, who even yet seems to me the fairest woman I ever knew. And why should not a woman be fair at sixty? Because the beauty that lasts till then, — and it can last, for I have seen it, — must be of the noblest and most satisfying kind, wholly independent of form or colouring; — a beauty such as a young woman can by no art attain, but which, once attained, no woman need ever fear to lose, till the coffin-lid, closing over its last and loveliest smile, makes of it “a joy for ever.”

Mrs. Rochdale was tall — too tall in youth; but your well-statured women have decidedly the advantage after forty. Her features, more soft than strong, — looking softer still under the smooth-banded gray hair — might have been good: I am no artist: I do not know. But it was not that; it was the intangible nameless grace which surrounded

her as with an atmosphere, making her presence in a room like light, and her absence like its loss; her soft but stately courtesy of mien, in word and motion alike harmonious. Silent, her gentle ease of manner made every one else at ease. Speaking, though she was by no means a great talker, she always seemed instinctively to say just the right thing, to the right person, at the right moment, in the right way. She stood out distinct from all your "charming creatures," "most lady-like persons," "very talented women," as that rarest species of the whole race — a gentlewoman.

At twenty-three she became Mr. Rochdale's wife; at twenty-five his widow. From that time her whole life was devoted to the son who, at a twelvemonth old, was already Lemuel Rochdale, Esquire, lord of the manor of Thorpe and Stretton-Magna, owner of one of the largest estates in the county. Poor little baby!

He was the puniest, sickliest baby she ever saw, I have heard my mother say; but he grew up into a fine boy and a handsome youth; not unlike Mrs. Rochdale, except that a certain hereditary pride of manner, which in her was almost beautiful — if any pride can be beautiful, — was in him exaggerated to self-assurance and haughtiness. He was the principal person in the establishment while he

yet trundled hoops; and long before he discarded jackets had assumed his position as sole master of the manor-house — allowing, however, his mother to remain as sole mistress.

He loved her very much, I think — better than horses, dogs, or guns; swore she was the kindest and dearest mother in England, and handsomer ten times over than any girl he knew.

At which the smiling mother would shake her head in credulous incredulousness. She rarely burdened him with caresses; perhaps she had found out early that boys dislike them — at least he did: to others she always spoke of him as “my son,” or “Mr. Rochdale;” and her pride in him, or praise of him, was always more by implication than by open word. Yet all the house, all the village, knew quite well how things were. And though they were not often seen together, except on Sundays, when, year after year, she walked up the church-aisle, holding her little son by the hand; then, followed by the sturdy school-boy; finally, leaning proudly on the youth’s proud arm, — every body said emphatically that the young squire was “his mother’s own son;” passionately beloved, after the fashion of women ever since young Eve smiled down on Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man from the Lord.”

So he grew up to be twenty-one years old.

On that day Mrs. Rochdale, for the first time, since her widowhood, opened her house, and invited all the country round. The morning was devoted to the poorer guests; in the evening there was a dinner-party and ball.

I dressed her, having since my girlhood been to her a sort of amateur milliner and lady's-maid. I may use the word "amateur" in its strictest sense, since it was out of the great love and reverence I had for her that I had got into this habit of haunting the manor-house. And since love begets love, and we always feel kindly to those we have been kind to, Mrs. Rochdale was fond of me. Through her means, and still more through herself, I gained a better education than I should have done as only her bailiff's daughter. But that is neither here nor there.

Mrs. Rochdale was standing before the glass in her black velvet gown; she never wore any thing but black, with sometimes a gray or lilac ribbon. She had taken out from that casket, and was clasping on her arms and neck, white and round even at five-and-forty, some long-unworn family jewels.

I admired them very much.

"Yes, they are pretty. But I scarcely like to see myself in diamonds, Martha. I shall only wear

them a few times, and then resign them to my daughter-in-law."

"Your daughter-in-law? Has Mr. Rochdale —"

"No," (smiling) "Mr. Rochdale has not made his choice yet; but I hope he will ere long. A young man should marry early, especially a young man of family and fortune. I shall be very glad when my son has chosen his wife."

She spoke as if she thought he had nothing to do but to choose, after the fashion of kings and sultans.

I smiled. She misinterpreted my thought, saying with some little severity:

"Martha, you mistake. I repeat, I shall be altogether glad, even if such a chance were to happen to-day."

Ah, Mrs. Rochdale, was ever any widowed mother of an only son "altogether glad" when first startled into the knowledge that she herself was not his all in the world? that some strange woman had risen up, for whose sake he was bound to "leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife?" A righteous saying, but hard to be understood at first by the mothers.

It afterwards struck me as an odd coincidence, that what Mrs. Rochdale had wished might happen did actually happen that same night.

The prettiest, and beyond all question the

“sweetest,” girl in all our county families; — among which alone it was probable or permissible that our young squire should “throw the handkerchief,” — was Miss Celandine Childe, niece and heiress of Sir John Childe. I was caught by her somewhat fanciful name, — after Wordsworth’s flower, — which, as I overheard Mrs. Rochdale say, admirably expressed her.

I thought so too, when, peeping through the curtained ballroom-door, I caught sight of her, distinct among all the young ladies, as one’s eye lights upon a celandine in a spring meadow. She was smaller than any lady in the room — very fair, with yellow hair — the only real gold hair I ever saw. Her head drooped like a flower-cup; and her motions, always soft and quiet, reminded one of the stirrings of a flower in the grass. Her dress — as if to humour the fancy, or else Nature herself did so by making that colour most suitable to the girl’s complexion — was some gauzy stuff, of a soft pale-green. Bright, delicate, innocent, and fair, you could hardly look at her without wishing to take her up in your bosom like a flower.

The ball was a great success. Mrs. Rochdale came up to her dressing-room long after midnight, but with the bright glow of maternal pride still burning on her cheeks. She looked quite young again, forcing one to acknowledge the fact constantly

avouched by the elder generation, that our mothers and grandmothers were a great deal handsomer than we. Certainly, not a belle in the ballroom could compare with Mrs. Rochdale in my eyes. I should have liked to have told her so. In a vague manner I said something which slightly approximated to my thought.

Mrs. Rochdale answered, innocent of the compliment, "Yes, I have seen very lovely women in my youth. But to-night my son pointed out several whom he admired — one in particular."

"Was it Miss Childe, madam?"

"How acute you are, little Martha! How could you see that?"

I answered, rather deprecatingly, that, from the corner where I was serving ices, I had heard several people remark Mr. Rochdale's great attention to Miss Childe.

"Indeed!" with a slight sharpness of accent. A moment or two after she added, with some *hauteur*, "You mistake, my dear; Mr. Rochdale could never be so uncourteous as to pay exclusive attention to any one of his guests; but Miss Childe is a stranger in the neighbourhood." After a pause: "She is a most sweet-looking girl. My son said so to me, and — I perfectly agreed with him."

I let the subject drop — nor did Mrs. Rochdale resume it.

A month after I wondered if she knew what all the servants at the manor-house and all the villagers at Thorpe soon knew quite well, and discussed incessantly in butler's pantries and kitchens, over pots of ale and by cottage-doors — that our young squire from that day forward gave up his shooting, his otter-hunting, and even his coursing, and “went a-courting” sedulously for a whole month to Ashen Dale.

Meanwhile Sir John and Miss Childe came twice to luncheon. I saw her, pretty creature! walking by Mrs. Rochdale's side to feed the swans, and looking more like a flower than ever. And once, stately in the family-coach, which tumbled over the rough roads, two hours there and two hours back, shaking the old coachman almost to pieces, did Mrs. and Mr. Rochdale drive over to a formal dinner at Ashen Dale.

Finally, in the Christmas-week, after an interval of twenty lonely Christmasses past and gone, did our lady of the manor prepare to pay to the same place a three-days' visit — such as is usual among county families — the “rest-day, the pressed-day,” and the day of departure.

I was at the door when she came home. Her

usually bright and healthy cheeks were somewhat pale, and her eyes glittered; but her eyelids were heavy, as with long pressing back of tears. Mr. Rochdale did not drive, but sat beside her; he too seemed rather grave. He handed her out of the carriage carefully and tenderly. She responded with a fond smile. Mother and son went up the broad staircase arm-in-arm.

That night the servants who had gone to Ashen Dale talked "it" all over with the servants who had stayed at home; and every point was satisfactorily settled, down to the bride's fortune and pin-money, and whether she would be married in Brussels or Honiton lace.

Yet still Mrs. Rochdale said nothing. She looked happy, but pale, constantly pale. The squire was in the gayest spirits imaginable. He was, as I have said, a very handsome and winning young fellow; rather variable in his tastes, and easily guided, some people said — but then it was always the old who said it, and nobody minded them. We thought Miss Celandine Childe was the happiest and luckiest girl imaginable.

She looked so when, after due time, the three-days' visit was returned; after which Sir John departed, and Miss Childe stayed behind.

That evening — it was just the time of year

when "evenings" begin to be perceptible, and in passing the drawing-room door I had heard the young master say something to Miss Childe about "prim-roses in the woods" — that evening I was waiting upon Mrs. Rochdale's toilet. She herself stood at the oriel window. It was after dinner — she had come up to her room to rest.

"Look here, Martha."

She pointed to the terrace-walk leading to the pool. There were the two young people sauntering slowly past — he gazing down on her, she with her eyes drooped low, low to the very ground. But her arm rested in his, in a safe, happy, clinging way, as knowing it had a right there to rest for ever.

"It is so, Mrs. Rochdale?"

"Ay, Martha. What do you think of my — my children?"

A few tears came to her eyes, — a few quivers fluttered over and about her mouth; but she gazed still — she smiled still.

"Are you satisfied, madam?"

"Quite. It is the happiest thing in the world — for him. They will be married at Christmas."

"And you —"

She put her hands softly on my lips, and said smiling, "Plenty of time to think of that — plenty of time."

After this day she gradually grew less pale, and recovered entirely her healthy, cheerful tone of mind. It was evident that she soon began to love her daughter elect very much — as indeed, who could help it? — and that by no means as a mere matter of form had she called them both “my children.”

For Celandine, who had never known a mother, it seemed as if Mrs. Rochdale were almost as dear to her as her betrothed. The two ladies were constantly together; and in them the proverbially formidable and all but impossible possibility bade fair to be realised, of a mother and daughter-in-law as united as if they were of the same flesh and blood.

The gossips shook their heads and said, “It would’nt last.” I think it would. Why should it not? They were two noble, tender, unselfish women. Either was ready to love any thing he loved — to renounce anything to make him happy. In him, the lover and son, was their meeting-point, in him they learned to love one another.

Strange that women cannot always see this. Strange that a girl should not, above all but her own mother, cling to the mother of him she loves — the woman who has borne him, nursed him, cherished him, suffered for him more than any living creature can suffer, excepting — ay, sometimes not even excepting — his wife. Most strange, that a mother,

who would be fond and kind to any thing her boy cared for, — his horse or his dog, — should not, above all, love the creature he loves best in the world, on whom his happiness, honour, and peace, are staked for a lifetime. Alas, that a bond so simple, natural, holy, should be found so hard as to be almost impossible — even among the good women of this world! Mothers, wives, — whose fault is it? Is it because each exacts too much for herself, and too little for the other, — one forgetting that she was ever young, the other that she will one day be old? Or that in the tenderest women's devotion lurks a something of jealousy, which blinds them to the truth — as true in love as in charity — that "it is more blessed to give than to receive?" Perhaps I, Martha Stretton, spinster, have no right to discuss this question. But one thing I will say: that I can forgive much to an unloved daughter-in-law, — to an unloving one, *nothing*.

And now, from this long digression, — which is not so irrelevant as it at first may seem, — let me return to my story.

The year grew and waned. Mrs. Rochdale said to me, when it was near its closing, that it had been one of the happiest years she had ever known.

I believe it was. The more so as, like many a season of great happiness, it began with a conquered

pang. But of this no one ever dared to hint; and perhaps the mother now would hardly have acknowledged, even to herself, that it had temporarily existed.

CHAPTER II.

THE young people were to have been married at Christmas; but early in December the long-invalided Lady Childe died. This deferred the wedding. The lover said, loudly and often, that it was "very hard." The bride-elect said nothing at all. Consequently every lady's-maid and woman-servant at the manor-house, and every damsel down the village, talked over Miss Childe's hard-heartedness; especially as, soon after, she went travelling with poor broken-hearted Sir John Childe, thereby parting with her betrothed for three whole months.

But I myself watched her about the manor-house the last few days before she went away. O Lemuel Rochdale, what had you deserved, that heaven should bless you with the love of two such women — mother and bride!

Celandine went away. The manor-house was very dull after she was gone. Mrs. Rochdale said she did not wonder that her son was absent a good deal — it was natural. But this she only said to me. To others, she never took any notice of his absence at all.

These absences continued, — lengthened. In most young men they would have been unremarked; but Lemuel was so fondly attached to his mother, that he rarely in his life had spent his evenings away from home and her. Now, in the wild March nights, in the soft April twilights, in the May moonlights, Mrs. Rochdale sat alone in the great drawing-room, where they had sat so happily last year — all three of them.

She sat, grave and quiet, over her book or her knitting, still saying — if she ever said any thing — that it was quite “natural” her son should amuse himself abroad.

Once I heard her ask him, “Where he had been to-night?”

He hesitated; then said, “Up the village, mother.”

“What, again? How fond you are of moonlight walks up the village!”

“Am I?” whipping his boots with his cane. “Why, mother, moonlight is — very pretty, you know; and the evenings here are — so long.”

“True.” His mother half sighed. “But soon, you know, Celandine will be back.”

It might have been my mistake, but I thought the young man turned scarlet, as, whistling his dog, he hastily quitted the room.

"How sensitive these lovers are!" said Mrs. Rochdale, smiling. "He can hardly bear to hear her name. I do wish they were married."

But that wish was still further deferred. Sir John Childe, fretful, ailing, begged another six months before he lost his niece. They were young; and he was old, and had not long to live. Besides, thus safely and happily betrothed, why should they not wait? A year more or less was of little moment to those who were bound together firm and sure, in good and ill, for a life-time. Nay, did she not from the very day of her betrothal feel herself Lemuel's faithful wife?

Thus, Mrs. Rochdale told me, did Celandine urge — out of the love which in its completeness hardly recognised such a thing as separation. Her mother that was to be, reading the passage out of her letter, paused, silenced by starting tears.

The lover consented to this further delay. He did not once say that it was "very hard." Again Mrs. Rochdale began to talk, but with a tone of fainter certainty, about their being married next Christmas.

Meanwhile the young squire appeared quite satisfied; shot, fished, lounged about his property as usual, and kept up his spirits amazingly.

He likewise took his moonlight walks up the

village with creditable persistency. Once or twice I heard it whispered about that he did not take them alone.

But every one in the neighbourhood so liked the young squire, and so tenderly honoured his mother, that it was some time before the faintest of these ill whispers reached the ear of Mrs. Rochdale.

I never shall forget the day she heard it.

She had sent for me to help her in gathering her grapes; a thing she often liked to do herself, giving the choice bunches to her own friends, and to the sick poor of her neighbours. She was standing in the vinery when I came. One moment's glance showed me something was amiss, but she stopped the question ere it was well out of my lips.

"No, nothing, Martha. This bunch — cut it while I hold it."

But her hand shook so that the grapes fell and were crushed, dyeing purple the stone-floor. I picked them up — she took no notice.

Suddenly she put her hand to her head. "I am tired. We will do this another day."

I followed her across the garden to the hall-door. Entering, she gave orders to have the carriage ready immediately.

"I will take you home, Martha. I am going to the village."

Now the village was about two miles distant from the manor-house, — a mere cluster of cottages; among which were only three decent dwellings — the butcher's, the baker's, and the schoolhouse. Mrs. Rochdale rarely drove through Thorpe, — still more rarely did she stop there.

She stopped now — it was some message at the schoolhouse. Then, addressing the coachman, —

“Drive on — to the baker's shop.”

Old John started — touched his hat hurriedly. I saw him and the footman whispering on the box. Well I could guess why!

“The baker's, Mrs. Rochdale? — Cannot I call? — Indeed, it is a pity you should take that trouble.”

She looked me full in the face; — I felt myself turn crimson.

“Thank you, Martha; but I wish to go myself.”

I ceased. But I was now quite certain she knew, and guessed I knew also, that which all the village were now talking about. What could be her motive for acting thus? Was it to show her own ignorance of the report? No, that would have been to imply a falsehood; and Mrs. Rochdale was stanchly, absolutely true in deed as in word. Or was it to prove them all liars and scandal-mongers, that the lady of the manor drove up openly to the very door where —

Mrs. Rochdale startled me from my thoughts with her sudden voice, sharp and clear.

"He is a decent man, I believe, — Hine, the baker?"

"Yes, madam."

"He has — a daughter, who — waits in the shop?"

"Yes, madam."

She pulled the check-string with a quick jerk, and got out. Two small burning spots were on either cheek; otherwise she looked herself — her tall, calm, stately self.

I wondered what Nancy thought of her — handsome Nancy Hine, who was laughing in her free loud way behind the counter, but who, perceiving the manor-house carriage, stopped, startled.

I could see them quite plainly through the shop-window — the baker's daughter and the mother of the young squire. I could see the very glitter in Mrs. Rochdale's eyes, as, giving in her ordinary tone some domestic order, she took the opportunity of gazing steadily at the large, well-featured girl, who stood awkward and painfully abashed, nay, blushing scarlet; though people did say that Nancy Hine was too clever a girl to have blushed since she was out of her teens.

I think they belied her — I think many people

belied her, both then and afterward. She was "clever" — much cleverer than most girls of her station; she looked bold and determined enough, but neither unscrupulous nor insincere.

During the interview, which did not last two minutes, I thought it best to stay outside the door. Of course, when Mrs. Rochdale re-entered the carriage, I made no remark. Nor did she.

She gave me the cake for the school-children. From the wicket I watched her drive off, just catching through the carriage-window her profile, so proudly cut, so delicate and refined.

That a young man, born and reared of such a mother, with a lovely fairy creature like Celandine for his own, his very own, could ever lower his tastes, habits, perceptions, to court — people said even to win — unlawfully, a common village-girl, handsome, indeed, but with the coarse blousy beauty which at thirty might be positive ugliness — surely — surely it was impossible! It could not be true what they said about young Mr. Rochdale and Nancy Hine.

I did not think his mother believed it either; if she had, could she have driven away with that quiet smile on her mouth, left by her last kind words to the school children and to me?

The young squire had gone to Scotland the day

before this incident occurred. He did not seem in any hurry to return; not even when, by some whim of the old baronet's, Sir John Childe and his niece suddenly returned to Ashen Dale.

Mrs. Rochdale drove over there immediately, and brought Celandine back with her. The two ladies, elder and younger, were gladly seen by us all, going about together in their old happy ways, lingering in the greenhouse, driving and walking, laughing their well-known merry laugh when they fed the swans of an evening in the pool.

There might have been no such things in the world as tale-bearers, slanderers, or — bakers' daughters.

Alas! this was only for four bright days — the last days when I ever saw Mrs. Rochdale looking happy and young, or Celandine Childe light-hearted and bewitchingly fair.

On the fifth, Sir John Childe's coach drove up to the manor-house, not lazily, as it generally did, but with ominously thundering wheels. He and Mrs. Rochdale were shut up in the library for two full hours. Then she came out, walking heavily, with a kind of mechanical strength, but never once drooping her head or her eyes, and desired me to go and look for Miss Childe, who was reading in the summer-

house. She waited at the hall-door till the young lady came in.

"Mamma!" Already she had begun, by Mrs. Rochdale's wish, to give her that fond name. But it seemed to strike painfully now.

"Mamma, is anything the matter?" and, turning pale, the girl clung to her arm.

"Nothing to alarm you, my pet; nothing that I care for — not I. I know it is false — wholly false; it could not but be." Her tone, warm with excitement, had nevertheless more anger in it than fear. Celandine's colour returned.

"If it be false, mamma, never mind it," she said in her fondling way. "But what is this news?"

"Something that your uncle has heard. Something he insists upon telling you. Let him. It cannot matter either to you or to me. Come, my child."

What passed in the library of course never transpired; but about an hour after I was sent for to Mrs. Rochdale's dressing-room.

She sat at her writing-table. There was a firm, hard, almost fierce expression in her eyes, very painful to see. Yet when Celandine glided in, with that soft step and white face, Mrs. Rochdale looked up with a quick smile.

"Has he read it? Is he satisfied with it?" and she took, with painfully assumed carelessness, a letter newly written, which Miss Childe brought to her.

The girl assented; then, kneeling by the table, pressed her cheek upon Mrs. Rochdale's shoulder.

"Let me write, mamma, just one little line, to tell him that I — that I don't believe —"

"Hush!" and the trembling lips were shut with a kiss tender as firm. "No; not a line, my little girl. I, his mother, may speak of such things to him. Not you."

It did at the moment seem to me almost sickening that this pure fragile flower of a girl should ever have been told there existed such wickedness as that of which not only Sir John Childe, but the whole neighbourhood now accused her lover; and which, as I afterwards learned, the baronet insisted should be at once openly and explicitly denied by Mr. Rochdale or the engagement must be held dissolved.

This question his mother claimed her own sole right to put to her son; and she had put it in the letter, which now, with a steady hand and a fixed smile — half-contemptuous as it were — she was sealing and directing.

"Martha, put this into the post-bag yourself;

and tell Miss Childe's maid her mistress will remain another week at the manor-house. Yes, my love, best so."

Then, sitting down wearily in the large armchair, Mrs. Rochdale drew Celandine to her; and I saw her take the soft small figure on her lap, like a child, and fold her up close in the grave, comforting silence of inexpressible love.

It was a four-days' post to and from the moors where Mr. Rochdale was staying. Heavily the time must have passed with those two poor women, whose all was staked upon him — upon his one little "yes" or "no."

Sunday intervened, when they both appeared at church — evening as well as morning. With this exception, they did not go out; and were seen but rarely about the house, except at dinner-time. Then, with her companion on her arm, Mrs. Rochdale would walk down, and take her seat at the foot of the long dreary dining-table, placing Miss Childe on her right hand.

The old butler said it made his heart ache to see how sometimes they both looked towards the head of the board — at the empty chair there.

The fifth day came and passed. No letters. The sixth likewise. In the evening, his mother

ordered Mr. Rochdale's chamber to be got ready, as it was "not improbable" he might unexpectedly come home. But he did not come.

They sat up half that night, I believe, both Mrs. Rochdale and Miss Childe.

Next morning they breakfasted together as usual in the dressing-room. As I crossed the plantation — for in my anxiety I made business at the manor-house every day now — I saw them both sitting at the window, waiting for the post.

Waiting for the post! Many a one has known that heart-sickening intolerable time; but few waitings have been like to theirs.

The stable-boy came lazily up, swinging the letter-bag to and fro in his hands. They saw it from the window.

The butler unlocked the bag as usual, and distributed the contents.

"Here's one from the young master. Lord bless us, what a big un!"

"Let me take it upstairs, William." For I saw it was addressed to Miss Childe.

Mechanically, as I went up stairs, my eye rested on the direction, in Mr. Rochdale's large careless hand; and on the seal, firm and clear, bearing not the sentimental devices he had once been fond of using, but his business-seal — his coat-of-arms. With a

heavy weight on my heart, I knocked at the dressing-room door.

Miss Childe opened it.

"Ah, mamma, for *me*, for *me*!" And with a sob of joy she caught and tore open the large envelope.

Out of it fell a heap of letters — her own pretty dainty letters, addressed "Lemuel Rochdale, Esq."

She stood looking down at them with a bewildered air; then searched through the envelope. It was blank — quite blank.

"*What* does he mean, mamma? I — don't — understand."

But Mrs. Rochdale did. "Go away, Martha," she said hoarsely, shutting me out at the door. And then I heard a smothered cry, and something falling to the floor like a stone.

CHAPTER III.

THE ladies did not appear at lunch. Word was sent down stairs that Miss Childe was "indisposed." I could not by any means get to see Mrs. Rochdale, though I hung about the house all day. Near dark I received a message that the mistress wanted me.

She was sitting in the dining-room, without lights. She sat as quiet, as motionless, as a carved figure. I dared not speak to her; I trembled to catch the first sound of her voice — my friend, my mistress, my dear Mrs. Rochdale!

"Martha!"

"Yes, madam."

"I wish, Martha" — and there the voice stopped.

I hardly know what prevented my saying or doing, on the impulse, things that the commonest instinct told me, the moment afterwards, ought to be said and done by no one — certainly not by me — at this crisis, to Mrs. Rochdale. So, with an effort, I stood silent in the dim light — as silent and motionless as herself.

"I wish, Martha" — and her voice was steady

now — “I wish to send you on a message, which requires some one whom I can implicitly trust.”

My heart was at my lips; but of course I only said, “Yes, madam.”

“I want you to go down to the village, to the — the — young person at the baker’s shop.

“Nancy Hine.”

“Is that her name? Yes, I remember; Nancy Hine. Bring her here — to the manor-house; without observation, if you can.”

“To-night, madam?”

“To-night. Make any excuse you choose; or rather, make no excuse at all. Say Mrs. Rochdale wishes to speak to her.”

“Anything more?” I asked softly, after a considerable pause.

“Nothing more. Go at once, Martha.”

I obeyed implicitly. Much as this my mission had surprised, nay, startled me, I knew Mrs. Rochdale always did what was wisest, best to do, under the circumstances. Also, that her combined directness of purpose and strength of character often led her to do things utterly unthought of by a weaker or less single-hearted woman.

Though a misty September moonlight, I walked blindly on in search of Nancy Hine.

She was having a lively gossip at the bakehouse-

CHAPTER III.

THE ladies did not appear at lunch. Word was sent down stairs that Miss Childe was "indisposed." I could not by any means get to see Mrs. Rochdale, though I hung about the house all day. Near dark I received a message that the mistress wanted me.

She was sitting in the dining-room, without lights. She sat as quiet, as motionless, as a carved figure. I dared not speak to her; I trembled to catch the first sound of her voice — my friend, my mistress, my dear Mrs. Rochdale!

"Martha!"

"Yes, madam."

"I wish, Martha" — and there the voice stopped.

I hardly know what prevented my saying or doing, on the impulse, things that the commonest instinct told me, the moment afterwards, ought to be said and done by no one — certainly not by me — at this crisis, to Mrs. Rochdale. So, with an effort, I stood silent in the dim light — as silent and motionless as herself.

"I wish, Martha" — and her voice was steady

now — “I wish to send you on a message, which requires some one whom I can implicitly trust.”

My heart was at my lips; but of course I only said, “Yes, madam.”

“I want you to go down to the village, to the — the — young person at the baker’s shop.

“Nancy Hine.”

“Is that her name? Yes, I remember; Nancy Hine. Bring her here — to the manor-house; without observation, if you can.”

“To-night, madam?”

“To-night. Make any excuse you choose; or rather, make no excuse at all. Say Mrs. Rochdale wishes to speak to her.”

“Anything more?” I asked softly, after a considerable pause.

“Nothing more. Go at once, Martha.”

I obeyed implicitly. Much as this my mission had surprised, nay, startled me, I knew Mrs. Rochdale always did what was wisest, best to do, under the circumstances. Also, that her combined directness of purpose and strength of character often led her to do things utterly unthought of by a weaker or less single-hearted woman.

Though a misty September moonlight, I walked blindly on in search of Nancy Hine.

She was having a lively gossip at the bakehouse-

door. The fire showed her figure plainly. Her large rosy arms, whitened with flour, were crossed over her decent working-gown. People allowed — even the most censorious — that Nancy was, in her own home, an active industrious lass, though too much given to dress of Sundays, and holding herself rather above her station every day.

“Nancy Hine, I want to speak with you a minute.”

“O, do you, Martha Stretton? Speak out, then. No secrets here.”

Her careless, not to say rude, manner irritated me. I just turned away and walked down the village. I had not gone many yards when Nancy’s hand was on my shoulder; and with a loud laugh at my sudden start, she pulled me by a back door into the shop.

“Now then?”

The baker’s daughter folded her arms in a rather defiant way. Her eyes were bright and open. There was in her manner some excitement, coarseness, and boldness; but nothing unvirtuous — nothing to mark the fallen girl whom her neighbours were pointing the finger at. I could not loathe her quite as much as I had intended.

“Now then?” she repeated.

I delivered Mrs. Rochdale's message, word for word.

Nancy seemed a good deal surprised — not shocked, or alarmed, or ashamed — merely surprised.

"Wants me, does she? Why?"

"She did not say."

"But you guess, of course. Well, who cares? Not I."

Yet her brown handsome face changed colour. Her hands nervously fidgeted about — taking off her apron, "making herself decent," as she called it. Suddenly she stopped.

"Has there been any letter — any news — from young Mr. Rochdale?"

"I believe there has; but that is no business of—"

"Mine, you mean, eh? Come, don't be so sharp, Martha Stretton. I'll go with you, only let me put on my best bonnet first."

"Nancy Hine," I burst out, "do you think it can matter to Mrs. Rochdale whether you go in a queen's gown or a beggar's rags, except that the rags might suit you best? Come as you are."

"I will," cried Nancy, glaring in my face; "and you, Martha, keep a civil tongue, will you? My father's daughter is as good as you, or your mistress

either. Get out of the shop. I'll follow 'ee. I bean't afeard."

That broad accent — broadening as she got angry — those abrupt awkward gestures! — what could the young squire, his mother's son, who had lived with that dear mother all his days, have seen attractive in Nancy Hine?

But similar anomalies of tastes have puzzled and will, puzzle, everybody — especially women, who in their attachments generally see clearer and deeper than men — to the end of time.

Nancy Hine walked in sullen taciturnity to the manor-house. It was already late — nearly all the household were gone to bed. I left the young woman in the hall, and went up to Mrs. Rochdale.

She was sitting before her dressing-room fire, absorbed in thought. In the chamber close by — in the large state-bed which Mrs. Rochdale always occupied, where generations of Rochdales had been born and died — slept the gentle girl whose happiness had been so cruelly betrayed. For that the engagement was broken, and for sufficient cause, Mr. Rochdale's answer, or rather non-answer, to his mother's plain letter made now certain, almost beyond a doubt.

"Hush; don't wake her," whispered Mrs. Rochdale, hurriedly. "Well, Martha?"

"The young woman — shall I bring her, madam?"

What, here?" Words cannot describe the look of repulsion, hatred, horror, which for a moment darkened Mrs. Rochdale's face. Perhaps the noblest human being, either man or woman, is born, not passionless, but with strong passions to be subjected to firm will. If at that moment — one passing moment — she could have crushed out of existence the girl who had led away her son — (for Nancy was older than he, and "no fool") — I think Mrs. Rochdale would have done it.

The next instant she would have done nothing of the kind; nothing that a generous Christian woman might not do.

She rose up, saying quietly, "The young person cannot come here, Martha. Bring her into — let me see — into the drawing-room.

There, entering a few minutes after, we found Mrs. Rochdale seated on one of the velvet couches, just in the light of the chandelier.

I do not suppose Nancy Hine had ever been in such a brilliant, beautiful room before. She was apparently quite stunned and dazzled by it; curtsied humbly, and stood with her arms wrapped up in her shawl, vacantly gazing about her.

Mrs. Rochdale spoke. "Nancy Hine, I believe, is your name?"

"Yes, my lady. That is — um — yes, ma'am, my name is Nancy."

She came a little forwarder now, and lifted up her eyes more boldly to the sofa. In fact, they both regarded each other keenly and long — the lady of the manor and the village girl.

I observed that Mrs. Rochdale had resumed her usual evening-dress, and that no trace of mental disorder was visible in her apparel — scarcely even in her countenance.

"I sent for you, Nancy Hine — (Martha, do not go away, I wish that there should be a witness to all that passes between this young woman and myself) — I sent for you on account of certain reports, more injurious to your character, if possible, than even to that of — the other person. Are you aware what reports I mean?"

"Yes, my lady, I be."

"That is an honest answer, and I like honesty," said Mrs. Rochdale, after a prolonged gaze at the face, now scarlet with wholesome blushes, of the baker's daughter. With a half-sigh of relief, she went on.

"You must also be aware that I, as the mother of — that other person, can have but one motive in sending for you here, — namely, to ask a question

which I more than any one else have a right to ask, and to have answered. - Do you understand me?"

"Some'at."

"Nancy," she resumed, after another long gaze, as if struck by something in the young woman different from what she had expected, and led thereby to address her differently from what she had at first intended, — "Nancy, I will be plain with you. It is not every lady — every mother, who would have spoken with you as I speak now, without anger or blame — only wishing to get from you the truth. If I believed the worst — if you were a poor girl whom my son had — had wronged, I would still have pitied you. Knowing him and now looking at you, I do *not* believe it. I believe you may have been foolish, light of conduct; but not guilty. Tell me — do tell me" — and the mother's agony broke through the lady's calm and dignified demeanour — "one word to assure me it is so!"

But Nancy Hine did not utter that word. She gave a little faint sob, and then dropped her head with a troubled awkward air, as if the presence of Lemuel's mother — speaking so kindly, and looking her through and through, was more than she could bear.

That poor mother, whom this last hope had failed, to whom her only son now appeared not only as a

promise-breaker, but the systematic seducer of a girl beneath his own rank — between whom and himself could exist no mental union, no false gloss of sentiment to cover the foulness of mere sensual passion — that poor mother sank back, and put her hand over her eyes, as if she would fain henceforth shut out from her sight the whole world.

After a while, she forced herself to look at the girl once more, — who, now recovering from her momentary remorse, was busy casting admiring glances, accompanied with one or two curious smiles, around the drawing-room.

“From your silence, young woman, I must conclude that I was mistaken; that — but I will spare you. You will have enough to suffer. There now remains only one question which I desire — which I am compelled — to ask: How long has this — this” — she seemed to choke over the unuttered word — “lasted?”

“Dunnot know what you mean.”

“I must speak plainer, then. How long, Nancy Hine, have you been my son’s — Mr. Rochdale’s — mistress?”

“Not a day — not an hour,” cried Nancy, violently, coming close to the sofa. “Mind what you say, Mrs. Rochdale. I’m an honest girl. I’m as good as you. I’m Mr. Rochdale’s *wife*!”

Mr. Rochdale's mother sat mute, and watched the girl take from a ribbon round her neck a ring — an unmistakeable wedding-ring, and slip it with a determined push on her large working-woman's finger. This done, she thrust it right in the lady's sight.

"Look'ee, what do 'ee say to that? He put it there. All your anger cannot take it off. I am Mrs. Lemuel Rochdale, your son's wife."

"Ah!" shrinking from her. But the next minute the true womanly feeling came into the virtuous mother's heart. "Better this — than — what they said. Better a thousand times. Thank God."

With a sigh, long and deep, she sat down, and again covered her eyes, as if trying to realise the amazing — impossible truth. Then she said slowly, "Martha, I think this" — she hesitated what name to give Nancy; finally gave no name at all — "I think she had better go away."

Nancy, quite awed and moved — all her boldness gone, was creeping out of the room after me, when Mrs. Rochdale called us back.

"Stay; at this hour of the night it is not fitting that — my son's wife — should be out alone. Martha, ask your father to see her safe home."

The baker's daughter turned at the door, and

said, "Thank'ee, my lady;" but omitted her curtsey this time.

And Mrs. Rochdale had found her daughter-in-law!

CHAPTER IV.

ERE we knew what had happened, the whole dynasty at the manor-house was changed. Mrs. Rochdale was gone; she left before her son returned from Scotland, and did not once see him. Mrs. Lemuel Rochdale, late Nancy Hine, was installed as lady of the manor.

Such a theme for gossip had not been vouchsafed our county for a hundred years. Of a surety they canvassed it over — talked it literally threadbare.

Mrs. Rochdale escaped it fortunately. She went abroad with Sir John and Miss Childe. All the popular voice was with her and against her son. They said he had killed that pretty gentle creature — who, however, did not die, but lived to suffer — perhaps better still, to overcome suffering; that he had broken his noble mother's heart. Few of his old friends visited him; not one of their wives visited his wife. He had done that which many "respectable" people are more shocked at than any species of profligacy — he had made a low marriage.

Society was harder upon him, harder than he

deserved. At least they despised him and his marriage for the wrong cause. Not because his wife was, when he chose her, a woman thoroughly beneath him in education, tastes, and feelings, — because from this inferiority it was impossible he could have felt for her any save the lowest and most degrading kind of love, — but simply because she was a village girl — a baker's daughter!

Sir John Childe said to Lemuel's mother, in a lofty compassion, the only time he was ever known to refer to the humiliating and miserable occurrence, "Madam, whatever herself might have been, the disgrace would have been lightened had your son not married a person of such low origin. Shocking! — a baker's daughter."

"Sir John," said Mrs. Rochdale with dignity, "if my son had chosen a woman suitable and worthy of being his wife, I would not have minded had she been the daughter of the meanest labourer in the land."

CHAPTER V.

"Miss Martha!" called out our rector's wife to me one day, "is it true, that talk I hear of Mrs. Rochdale's coming home?"

"Quite true, I believe."

"And where will she come to? Not to the manor-house?"

"Certainly not." I fear there was a bitterness in my tone, for the good old lady looked at me reprovingly.

"My dear, the right thing for us in this world is to make the very best of that which, having happened, was consequently ordained by Providence to happen. And we often find the worst things not so bad, after all. I was truly glad to-day to hear that Mrs. Rochdale was coming home."

"But not home to *them*, — not to the manor-house. She will take a house in the village. She will never meet them, any more than when she was abroad."

"But she will hear of them. That does great good sometimes."

“When there is any good to be heard.”

“I have told you, Martha, and I hope you have told Mrs. Rochdale, that there *is* good. When first I called on Mrs. Lemuel, it was simply in my character as the clergyman’s wife, doing what I believed my duty. I found that duty easier than I expected.”

“Because she remembered her position” — (“Her former position, my dear,” corrected Mrs. Wood) — “because she showed off no airs and graces, but was quiet, humble, and thankful; as became her, for the kindness you thus showed.”

“Because of that, and something more. Because the more I have seen of her the more I feel, that though not exactly to be liked, she is to be respected. She has sustained tolerably well a most difficult part, — that of an ignorant person suddenly raised to wealth; envied and abused by her former class, utterly scouted and despised by her present one. She has had to learn to comport herself as mistress where she was once an equal, and as an equal where she used to be an inferior. I can hardly imagine a greater trial, as regards social position.”

“Position? She has none. No ladies except yourself will visit her. Why should they?”

“My dear, why should they not? A woman who since her marriage has conducted herself with

perfect propriety, befitting the sphere to which she was raised; has lived retired, and forced herself into no one's notice; who is, whatever be her shortcomings in education and refinement of character, a good wife, a kind mistress —"

"How do you know that?"

"Simply because her husband is rarely absent a day from home; because all her servants have remained with her, and spoken well of her, these five years."

I could not deny these facts. They were known to the whole neighbourhood. The proudest of our gentry were not wicked enough to shut their eyes to them, even when they contemptuously stared at Mrs. Lemuel Rochdale driving drearily about in long summer afternoons in her lonely carriage, with not a single female friend to pay a morning visit to, or suffer the like infliction from; — not even at church, when quizzing her large figure and heavy gait, — for she had not become more sylph-like with added years, — they said she was growing "crumbie," like her father's loaves, and wondered she would persist in wearing the finest bonnets of all the congregation.

Nay, even I, bitter as I was, really pitied her, one sacrament-day, when she unwittingly advanced to the first "rail" of communicants; upon which all

the other "respectable" Christians hung back till the second. After that the Rochdales were not seen again at the communion. Who could marvel?

It was noticed, by some to his credit, by others as a point for ridicule, that her husband always treated her abroad and at home with respect and consideration. Several times a few hunting neighbours, lunching at the manor-house, brought word how Mrs. Lemuel Rochdale had taken the mistress's place at table, in a grave taciturn way, so that perforce every one had to forget entirely that he had ever joked and laughed over her father's counter with the *ci-devant* Nancy Hine.

For that honest old father, he had soon ceased to give any trouble to his aristocratic son-in-law, having died quietly, — in a comfortable and honourable bedroom at the manor-house too, — and been buried underneath an equally comfortable and honourable headstone to the memory of "Mr. Daniel Hine;" "baker" was omitted, to the great indignation of our village, who thought that if a tradesman could "carry nothing" else, he ought at least to carry the stigma of his trade out with him into the next world.

Mrs. Rochdale came home, — to the only house in the neighbourhood which could be found suitable. It was a little distance from the village, and three

miles from the manor-house. Many, I believe, wished her to settle in some other part of the country; but she briefly said that she "preferred" living here.

Her jointure, and an additional allowance from the estate, which was fully and regularly paid by my father, — still Mr. Rochdale's steward, — was, I believe, the only link of association between her and her former house. Nor did she apparently seek for more. The only possible or probable chance of her meeting the inhabitants of the manor-house was at Thorpe church; and she attended a chapel-of-ease in the next parish, which was, as she said, "nearer." She fell into her old habits of charity, — her old simple life; and though her means were much reduced, every one, far and near, vied in showing her attention and respect.

But Mrs. Rochdale did not look happy. She had grown much older, — was decidedly "an elderly lady" now. Instead of her fair calm aspect, was a certain unquiet air, a perpetual looking and longing for something she did not find. For weeks after she came to her new house she would start at strange knocks, and gaze eagerly after strange horsemen passing the window, as if she thought "he *may* come to see his mother." But he did not; and after a time she settled down into the patient dignity of hopeless pain.

Many people said, because Lemuel's name was never heard on her lips, that she cherished an implacable resentment towards him. That, I thought, was not true. She might have found it hard to forgive him, — most mothers would; but did any mother ever find any pardon impossible?

She had still his boyish portrait hanging beside his father's in her bedroom; and once, opening by chance a drawer usually kept locked, I found it contained — what? Lemuel's childish muslin frocks, his boyish cloth cap, his fishing-rod, and an old book of flies.

After that, who could believe his mother "implacable"?

Yet she certainly was a great deal harder than she used to be; harsher and quicker in her judgments; more unforgiving of little faults in those about her. With regard to her son, her mind was absolutely impenetrable. She seemed to have fortified and intrenched herself behind a strong endurance; it would take a heavy stroke to reach the citadel — the poor desolate citadel of the forlorn mother's heart.

The stroke fell. None can doubt Who sent it, nor why it came.

Mrs. Rochdale was standing at the school-house

door, when my cousin's lad George, who had been to see the hunt pass, ran hastily in.

"O mother, the squire's thrown, and killed."

"Killed!" O that shriek! May I never live to hear such another!

The tale, we soon found, was incorrect: Mr. Rochdale had only been stunned, and seriously injured, though not mortally. But — his poor mother!

CHAPTER VI.

FOR an hour she lay on the schoolhouse-floor, quite rigid. We thought she would never wake again. When she did, and we slowly made her understand that things were not as fatal as she feared, she seemed hardly able to take in the consolation.

"My bonnet, Martha, my bonnet! I must go to him." But she could not even stand.

I sent for my father. He came, bringing with him Dr. Hall, who had just left Mr. Rochdale.

Our doctor was a good man, whom every body trusted. At sight of him, Mrs. Rochdale sat up and listened — we all listened; no attempt at cold or polite disguises now — to his account of the accident. It was a simple fracture, curable by a few weeks of perfect quiet and care.

"Above all, my dear madam, *quiet*," — for the doctor had seen Mrs. Rochdale's nervous fastening of her cloak, and her quick glance at the door. "I would not answer for the results of even ten minutes' mental agitation."

Mrs. Rochdale comprehended. A spasm, sharp and keen, crossed the unhappy mother's face. With a momentary pride she drew back.

"I assure you, Dr. Hall, I had no — that is, I have already changed my intention."

Then she leaned back, closed her eyes and her quivering mouth — fast — fast! — folded quietly her useless hands; and seemed as if trying to commit her son, patiently and unrepining, into the care of the only Healer, — He "who woundeth, and His hands make whole."

At last she asked suddenly, "Who is with him?"

"His wife," said Dr. Hall, without hesitation. "She is a good and tender nurse; and he is fond of her."

Mrs. Rochdale was silent.

Shortly afterwards she went home in Dr. Hall's carriage; and by her own wish I left her there alone.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER that dreadful day, every night and morning for five days I went up to the manor-house, and back again to Mrs. Rochdale's cottage, bringing tidings, and hearing the further report, never missed, which came to her through Dr. Hall. It was almost always favourable; yet the agony of that "almost" seemed to stretch the mother's powers of endurance to their utmost limit — at times her face, in its stolid fixed quietness, had an expression half-insane.

Late in the afternoon of the sixth day — it was a rainy December Sunday, and scarcely, any one thought of stirring out but me — I was just considering whether it was not time to go to Mrs. Rochdale's, when some person, hooded and cloaked, came up the path to our door. It was herself.

"Martha, I want you. No thank you: I will not come in."

Yet she leaned a minute against the dripping veranda, pale and breathless.

"Are you afraid of taking a walk with me in

this rain — a long walk? No? Then put on your shawl and come.”

Though this was all she said, and I made no attempt to question her further, still I knew as well as if she had told me where she was going. We went through miry lanes, and soaking woods, where the partridges started up — whirring; across sunk fences, and under gloomy fir-plantations, till at last we came out opposite the manor-house. It looked just the same as in old times, save that there were no peacocks on the terrace, and the swans now never came near the house — no one fed or noticed them.

“Martha, do you see that light in my window? O my poor boy!”

She gasped, struggled for breath, leaned on my arm a minute, and then went steadily up, and rang the hall-bell.

“I believe there is a new servant; he may not know you, Mrs. Rochdale.” I said, to prepare her.

But she needed no preparation. She asked in the quietest way — as if paying an ordinary call — for “Mrs. Lemuel Rochdale.”

“Mistress is gone to lie down, ma’am. Master was worse, and she was up all night with him. But he is better again to day, thank the Lord!”

The man seemed really affected, as though both

“master” and “mistress” were served with truer than lip-service.

“I will wait to see Mrs. Lemuel,” said Mrs. Rochdale, walking right into the library.

The man followed, asking respectfully what name he should say.

“Merely a lady.”

We waited about a quarter of an hour. Then Mrs. Lemuel appeared — somewhat fluttered, looking, in spite of her handsome dress, a great deal shyer and more modest than the girl Nancy Hine.

“I beg pardon, ma’am, for keeping you waiting; I was with my husband. Perhaps you’re a stranger, and don’t know how ill he has been. I beg your pardon.”

Mrs. Rochdale put back her veil, and Mrs. Lemuel seemed as if, in common phrase, she could have dropped through the floor.

“I daresay you are surprised to see me here,” the elder lady began; “still, you will well imagine, a mother —” She broke down; It was some moments before she could command herself to say in broken accents, “I want to see — my son.”

“That you shall, with pleasure, Mrs. Rochdale,” said Nancy earnestly. “I thought once of sending for you; but —”

The other made some gesture to indicate that she was not equal to conversation, and hastily moved

up-stairs — Nancy following. At the chamber-door, however, Nancy interrupted her —

“Stop one minute, please. He has been so very ill; do let me tell him first, just to prepare —”

“He is my son — my own son. You need not be afraid,” said Mrs. Rochdale, in tones of which I know not whether bitterness or keen anguish was uppermost. She pushed by the wife, and went in.

We heard a faint cry, “O mother, my dear mother!” and a loud sob — that was all.

Mrs. Lemuel shut the door, and sat down on the floor outside, in tears. I forgot she had been Nancy Hine, and wept with her.

It was a long time before Mrs. Rochdale came out of her son's room. No one interrupted them, not even the wife. Mrs. Lemuel kept restlessly moving about the house, — sometimes sitting down to talk familiarly with me, then recollecting herself and resuming her dignity. She was much improved. Her manners and her mode of speaking had become more refined. It was evident, too, that her mind had been a good deal cultivated, and that report had not lied when it avouched sarcastically, that the squire had left off educating his dogs, and taken to educating his wife. If so, she certainly did her master credit. But Nancy Hine was always considered a “bright” girl.

Awkward she was still — large and *gauche* and underbred — wanting in that simple self-possession which needs no advantages of dress or formality of manner to confirm the obvious fact of innate “ladyhood.” But there was nothing coarse or repulsive about her — nothing that would strike one as springing from that internal and ineradicable “vulgarity,” which, being in the nature as much as in the bringing-up, no education or external refinement of manner can ever wholly conceal.

I have seen more than one “lady” of undeniable birth and rearing, who was a great deal more “vulgar” than Mrs. Lemuel Rochdale.

We were sitting by the dining-room fire. Servants came, doing the day’s mechanical service, and brought in the tray.

Mrs. Lemuel began to fidget about.

“Do you think, Miss Martha, she will stay and take some supper? Would she like to remain the night here? Ought I not to order a room to be got ready?”

But I could not answer for any of Mrs. Rochdale’s movements.

In process of time she came down, looking calm and happy — O, inconceivably happy! — scarcely happier, I doubt, even when, twenty-seven years ago, she had received her new-born son into her

bosom — her son, now born again to her in reconciliation and love. She even said, with a gentle smile, to her son's wife:

"I think he wants you. Suppose you were to go up stairs?"

Nancy fled like lightning.

"He says," murmured Mrs. Rochdale, looking at the fire, "that she has been a good wife to him."

"She is much improved in many ways."

"Most likely. My son's wife could not fail of that," returned Mrs. Rochdale, with a certain air that forbade all further criticism on Nancy. She evidently was to be viewed entirely as "my son's wife."

Mrs. Lemuel returned. She looked as if she had been crying. Her manner towards her mother-in-law was a mixture of gratitude and pleasure.

"My husband says, since you will not stay the night, he hopes you will take supper here, and return in the carriage."

"Thank you; certainly." And Mrs. Rochdale sat down — unwittingly, perhaps, — in her own familiar chair, by the bright hearth. Several times she sighed; but the happy look never altered. And now, wholly and for ever, passed away that sorrowful look of seeking for something never found. It was found.

I think a mother, entirely and eternally sure of

her son's perfect reverence and love, need not be jealous of any other love, not even for a wife. There is, in every good man's heart, a sublime strength and purity of attachment, which he never does feel, never can feel, for any woman on earth except his mother.

Supper was served; Mrs. Lemuel half-advanced to her usual place, then drew back, with a deprecating glance.

But Mrs. Rochdale quietly seated herself in the guest's seat at the side, leaving her son's wife to take the position of mistress and hostess at the head of the board.

Perhaps it was I only who felt a choking pang of regret and humiliation at seeing my dear, my noble Mrs. Rochdale sitting at the same table with Nancy Hine.

After that Sunday, the mother went every day to see her son. This event was the talk of the whole village: some worthy souls were glad; but I think the generality were rather shocked at the reconciliation. They "always thought Mrs. Rochdale had more spirit;" "wondered she could have let herself down." "But of course it was only on account of his illness. She might choose to be 'on terms' with her son, but it was quite impossible she could ever take up with Nancy Hine."

In that last sentiment I agreed. But then the gossips did not know that there was a great and a daily-increasing difference between Mrs. Lemuel Rochdale and "Nancy Hine."

I have stated my creed, as it was Mrs. Rochdale's, that lowness of birth does not necessarily constitute a low marriage. Also, that popular opinion was rather unjust to the baker's daughter. Doubtless she was a clever ambitious girl, anxious to raise herself, and glad enough to do so by marrying the squire. But I believe she was a virtuous and not unscrupulous girl, and I firmly believe she loved him. Once married, she tried to raise herself so as to be worthy of her station; to keep and deserve her husband's affection. That which would have made a woman of meaner nature insufferably proud, only made Nancy humble. Not that she abated one jot of her self-respect — for she was a high-spirited creature — but she had sense enough to see that the truest self-respect lies, not in exacting honour which is undeserved, but in striving to attain that worth which receives honour and observance as its rightful due.

From this quality in her probably grew the undoubted fact of her great influence over her husband. Also because, to tell the truth — (I would not for worlds Mrs. Rochdale should read this page) —

Nancy was of a stronger nature than he. Mild tempered, lazy, and kind, it was easier to him to be ruled than to rule, provided he knew nothing about it. This was why the gentle Celandine could not retain the love which Daniel Hine's energetic daughter won and was never likely to lose.

Mrs. Rochdale said to me, when for some weeks she had observed narrowly the ways of her son's household, "I think he is not unhappy. It might have been worse."

Thenceforward the gentry around Thorpe were "shocked" and "really quite amazed" every week of their lives. First, that poor Mr. Rochdale, looking very ill, but thoroughly content, was seen driving out with his mother by his side, and his wife, in her most objectionable and tasteless bonnet, sitting opposite. Secondly, that the two ladies, elder and younger, were several times seen driving out together, — only they two, alone! The village could scarcely believe this, even on the evidence of its own eyes. Thirdly, that on Christmas-day Mrs. Rochdale was observed in her old place in the manor-house pew; and when her son and his wife came in, she actually smiled!

After that everybody gave up the relenting mother-in-law as a lost woman!

CHAPTER VIII.

THREE months slipped away. It was the season when most of our county families were in town. When they gradually returned, the astounding truth was revealed concerning Mrs. Rochdale and her son. Some were greatly scandalised, some pitied the weakness of mothers, but thought that as she was now growing old, forgiveness was excusable.

"But of course she can never expect us to visit Mrs. Lemuel?"

"I am afraid not," was the rector's wife's mild remark. "Mrs. Rochdale is unlike most ladies; she is not only a gentlewoman, but a Christian."

Yet it was observable that the tide of feeling against the squire's "low" wife ebbed day by day. First, some kindly stranger noticed publicly that she was "extremely good-looking;" to confirm which, by some lucky chance, poor Nancy grew much thinner, probably with the daily walks to and from Mrs. Rochdale's residence. Wild reports flew abroad that the squire's mother, without doubt one of the most accomplished and well-read women of her

generation, was actually engaged in "improving the mind" of her daughter-in-law!

That some strong influence was at work became evident in the daily change creeping over Mrs. Lemuel. Her manners grew quieter, gentler; her voice took a softer tone; even her attire, down, or rather up, to the much-abused bonnets, was subdued to colours suitable for her large and showy person. One day a second stranger actually asked "who was that *distingué*-looking woman?" and was coughed down. But the effect of the comment remained.

Gradually the point at issue slightly changed; and the question became:

"I wonder whether Mrs. Rochdale expects us to visit Mrs. Lemuel?"

But for Mrs. Rochdale, though of course she knew all about it, — for every body knew every thing in our village, — never vouchsafed the slightest hint one way or the other as to her expectations.

Nevertheless the difficulty increased daily, especially as the squire's mother had been long the object of universal respect and attention from her neighbours. The question, "To visit or not to visit?" was mooted and canvassed far and wide. Mrs. Rochdale's example was strong; yet the "county people" had the prejudices of their class, and

most of them had warmly regarded poor Celandine Childe.

I have hitherto not said a word of Miss Childe. She was still abroad. But though Mrs. Rochdale rarely alluded to her, I often noticed how her eyes would brighten at sight of letters in the delicate handwriting I knew so well. The strong attachment between these two nothing had power to break.

One day she sat poring long over one of Celandine's letters, and many times took off her glasses, — alas! as I said, Mrs. Rochdale was an old lady now, — to wipe the dew from them. At length she called in a clear voice, "Martha!" and I found her standing by the mirror smiling.

"Martha, I am going to a wedding!"

"Indeed! Whose, madam?"

"Miss Childe's. She is to be married next week."

"To whom?" I cried, in unfeigned astonishment.

"Do you remember Mr. Sinclair?"

I did. He was the rector of Ashen Dale. One of the many suitors whom, years ago, popular report had given to Miss Childe.

"Was that really the case, Mrs. Rochdale?"

"Yes. Afterwards he became, and has been ever

since, her truest, tenderest, most faithful *friend*.
Now —”

Mrs. Rochdale sat down, still smiling, but sighing also. I, too, felt a certain pang, for which I blamed myself the moment after, to think that love can ever die and be buried. Yet surely the Maker of the human heart knows it best. One thing I know, and perhaps it would account for a great deal, that the Lemuel of Celandine's love was not, never had been, the real Lemuel Rochdale. Still —

Something in my looks betrayed me; for Mrs. Rochdale, turning round, said decisively:

“Martha, I am very glad of this marriage, deeply and entirely glad. She will be happy, — my poor Celandine!”

And happy she always has been, I believe.

After Mrs. Rochdale's return from the wedding, she one day sent for me.

“Martha,” — and an amused smile about her mouth reminded me of our lady of the manor in her young days, — “I am going to astonish the village. I intend giving a dinner-party. Will you write the invitations?”

They were, without exception, to the “best” families of our neighbourhood. Literally *the best* — the worthiest; people, like Mrs. Rochdale herself, to whom “position” was a mere clothing, used or not

used, never concealing or meant to conceal the honest form beneath, the common humanity that we all owe alike to father Adam and mother Eve. People who had no need to stickle for the rank that was their birthright, the honour that was their due; whose blood was so thoroughly "gentle," that it inclined them to gentle manners and gentle deeds. Of such — and there are not a few throughout our English land — of such are the true aristocracy.

All Thorpe was on the *qui vive* respecting this wonderful dinner-party, for hitherto — gossip said because she could of course have no gentleman at the head of her table — Mrs. Rochdale had abstained from anything of the kind. Now, would her son really take his rightful place at the entertainment? and if so, what was to be done with his wife? Could our "best" families, much as they esteemed Mrs. Rochdale, ever under any possible circumstances be expected to meet the former Nancy Hine?

I need not say how the whole question served for a week's wonder; and how every body knew every other body's thoughts and intentions a great deal better than "other bodies" themselves. Half the village was out at the door or window, when on this memorable afternoon the several carriages were seen driving up to Mrs. Rochdale's house.

Within, we are quiet enough. She had few pre-

parations, — she always lived in simple elegance. Even on this grand occasion she only gave what cheer her means could afford — nothing more. Show was needless, for every guest was not a mere acquaintance, but a friend.

Dressed richly, and with special care, — how well I remembered, that is, if I had dared to remember, another similar toilette! — Mrs. Rochdale sat in her chamber. Not until the visitors were all assembled did she descend to the drawing-room.

Entering there — she did not enter alone; on her arm was a lady, of about thirty; large and handsome in figure; plainly, but most becomingly attired; — a lady, to whose manners or appearance none could have taken the slightest exception, and on whom any stranger's most likely comment would have been — “What a fine-looking woman! but so quiet.”

This lady Mrs. Rochdale at once presented to the guests, with a simple, unimpressive quietness, which was the most impressive effect she could have made, —

“My daughter, Mrs. Lemuel Rochdale.”

In a week, “every body” visited at the manor-house.

* * * * *

Perhaps I ought to end this history by describing

the elder and younger Mrs. Rochdale as henceforward united in the closest sympathy and tenderest affection. It was not so: it would have been unnatural, nay, impossible. The difference of education, habits, character, was too great ever to be wholly removed. But the mother and daughter-in-law maintain a sociable intercourse, even a certain amount of kindly regard, based on one safe point of union, where the strongest attachment of both converges and mingles. Perhaps, as those blest with a superabundance of faithful love often end by deserving it, Mr. Rochdale may grow worthy, not only of his wife, but of his mother, in time.

Mrs. Rochdale is quite an old lady now. You rarely meet her beyond the lane where her small house stands; which she occupies still, and obstinately refuses to leave. But meeting her, you could not help turning back for another glance at her slow, stately walk, and her ineffably beautiful smile. A smile which, to a certainty, would rest on the gentleman upon whose arm she always leans, and whose horse is seen daily at her gate, with a persistency equal to that of a young man going a-courting. For people say in our village that the squire, with all his known affection for his good wife, is as attentive as any lover to his beloved old mother, who has been such a devoted mother to him.

One want exists at the manor-house, — there are no children. For some things this is as well; and yet I know not. However, so it is; and since it is, it must be right to be. When this generation dies out, probably the next will altogether have forgotten the fact, that the last Mr. Rochdale made what society ignominiously terms “a low marriage.”

END OF A LOW MARRIAGE.

THE DOUBLE HOUSE.

THE DOUBLE MOON

THE DOUBLE HOUSE.

"JAMES, the house is let."

"Which?" said Mr. Rivers, never looking up from his dinner — for a dozen patients, scattered over a dozen square miles, were awaiting him.

"The house — the Double House. The one that everybody thought would never get a tenant. But it has got one."

"Who?"

"A Dr. Merchiston, a physician; but luckily for us, he does not practise. He is a man of large fortune."

"Married? — children?"

"I really don't know. But I should rather think not. Most family men would object to that very inconvenient house. It might suit an eccentric bachelor, who could live alone in the one-half, and shut up his domestics in the other, locking the door of communication between. But for a mistress and mother of a family — dear me! — one might as well live in two separate houses. One never could hear the

children cry of nights; and the maids might idle as much as they liked without —”

Here I turned round, finding I was talking to the air. My husband had disappeared. It was in vain to attempt to interest *him* about the Double House, or the people that were coming there.

But as to the rest of our village — speculation ran wild concerning the new-comers. First, because a grave, dignified, middle-aged gentleman like Dr. Merchiston — of such composed and quiet manners, too — had chosen to live in this eccentric and uncomfortable mansion. (For, as before stated, it went by the name of the Double House, and consisted of two houses joined together by a covered passage and door of communication, each having its separate entrance, and being, in fact, a complete dwelling.) Secondly, because, when the furniture was sent in, it was discovered to be the appointments of two distinct habitations; namely, two drawing-rooms, two dining-rooms, two kitchens, and so on. The wonder grew — when Dr. Merchiston, accompanied by an elderly person, “Mrs. Merchiston’s maid” (there was a Mrs. Merchiston, then!) inducted into the establishment two distinct sets of domestics; two cooks, two housemaids, &c.

And now everybody waited for the master and mistress, who, we learnt, had to make a long journey from London by post — for all this happened when

I was a young married woman, more than forty years ago. I had my hands empty then — possibly, my head too, for I remember loitering about the whole day, and sitting lazily at parlour windows, just to catch the first sight of my new neighbours. Nay, I will confess that when the chaise and four thundered past our house, I peeped from under the blind.

In the carriage I saw only the elderly female servant, and a figure leaning back. Dr. Merchiston was certainly not there.

Half-an-hour afterwards he galloped past in the twilight to his own door, which closed upon him as quickly as it had, a short time before, closed upon the others.

“Well, they are come,” said I to James that evening.

“Who?” he ejaculated most provokingly.

“The Merchistons, of course. And nobody is a bit the wiser.”

My husband put on his quaintest smile (a merry man, children, was your grandfather) — “Never mind — there’s Sunday coming.”

My hopes revived; I led a dull life in James’ long absences, and had been really anxious for a neighbour — a pleasant neighbour — a true gentlewoman. Yes, of course we should see the Merchistons

at church on Sunday, for a large pew had been taken, cushioned and hassocked to perfection; besides, the Doctor looked like a respectable church-going gentleman.

And sure enough, when service began, above the high pew, distinct to the eye of the whole congregation, rose his tall head and shoulders.

He was in the prime of life, though his hair was already, as we say of a September tree, "turning." He had a large well-shaped head, very broad across the crown, just where my grandson tells me lies the bump of conscientiousness; but we never thought of such folly as phrenology in my days. For the face — I do not clearly remember the features, but I know the general impression conveyed was that of a strong will, capable of any amount of self-control or self-denial. The eyes, though honest and clear, had at times much restlessness in them; when steady and fixed, they were, I think, the saddest eyes I ever saw. His countenance was sickly and pale, though he flushed up once or twice on meeting the universal stare; which stare increased tenfold when he actually repeated audibly and devoutly the responses, which the Rubric enjoins on the congregation, and the congregation usually delegates to the charity-boys and the clerk.

Except this we could find nothing extraordinary

in Dr. Merchiston's appearance or behaviour. He sat in his pew, alone; he went out as he had entered, silently, quietly, and alone. In another pew sat two of the house-servants, and Mrs. Merchiston's maid. The lady herself did not come to church at all that day.

It was rather disappointing — since, by Apedale etiquette, no one could call on Mrs. Merchiston until she had appeared at church. But we heard during the week that the Rector had called on Dr. Merchiston.

I tried to persuade Mr. Rivers to do the same — it would be only kind and neighbourly. After half-an-hour's coaxing, which apparently was all thrown away, he briefly observed —

“Peggy, I've been.”

“Oh! do tell me all about it, from the very beginning. Which door did you knock at? The one with a brass plate, and ‘Dr. Merchiston’ on it?”

“Yes.”

“And you saw him? You were shown up to the drawing-room — or the library? Which?”

“Library.”

“Was he alone? Was he polite and pleasant? Did you see his wife?”

Two nods and a shake of the head were all the answer I received to these three questions.

"Dear me! How odd! I hope you inquired after her? How did her husband say she was?"

"Quite well."

"Nothing more?"

"Nothing more."

"Well — you are the most provoking man to get anything out of."

"And you, my Peggy, are one of those excellent women who will never cease trying hard to get out of a man things which he absolutely does not know."

I laughed; for what was the use of quarrelling? Besides, didn't I know all James' little peculiarities before I married him?

"Just one question more, James. Have they any children?"

"Didn't ask."

So the whole Merchiston affair stood precisely where it was — until the next Sunday. Then, in the afternoon, as I walked to church, I saw a lady come quietly out of the Double House, at the left-hand door — not the one with the brass name-plate — close it after her, and proceed alone across the road and down Church-alley.

She paused a moment in the churchyard walk, which was very beautiful in the May afternoon, with the two great trees meeting overhead, and throwing chequers of light and shade on the path leading to

the porch. She looked around as if she admired and enjoyed this scene, with its picturesque groups of twos and threes, — fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, lingering about and talking till the chime of bells should cease. She looked apparently with a kindly interest on them all, and then, as if suddenly conscious that they looked back inquisitively at her; dropped her veil and hurriedly entered the church.

I heard her asking the sexton in a low voice, which seemed to belong to a woman still young, “which was Dr. Merchiston’s pew?”

She was shown in, and then — being small of stature — she entirely vanished from my gaze, and that of the congregation.

Could it be that this was Mrs. Merchiston?

I do not exaggerate when I say that I had six successive “droppers-in” on the Monday morning — to my great inconvenience, for I was making my cowslip-wine — I should say my first attempt at this potent liquor — and that the sole subject of conversation was Mrs. Merchiston.

“What a tiny woman!” “How plainly dressed! why, her pelisse was quite old-fashioned.” “Yet somebody said she was young.” “He does not seem above forty, either.” “How strange that he should let her go to church alone — the first time of her appearance, too!”

Such were the comments, blended with a small quantum of lately-elicited facts, which reached me concerning my new neighbours. "Very odd people — exceedingly queer — ought to be inquired into," was the general conclusion. All the village began to discuss the Double House, the duplicate establishment, and the notable facts that, since their arrival, Dr. Merchiston had been seen out every day, Mrs. Merchiston never; that Dr. Merchiston had come to church, Mrs. Merchiston staying at home, and *vice versa*.

The result was, the Apedale ladies cautiously resolved to defer "visiting" the strangers a little longer, till assured of their respectability; and I being myself a new comer, hating gossip, scandal, and censoriousness, with the virulence of warm-hearted, all-credulous youth, inly determined to call the next day.

But first, of course, I asked my husband's leave; and gaining it, hazarded a question or two further, since James, from his profession and long standing in the county, knew everybody and everything.

"Who is he, Peg? I know no more than that he is Evan Merchiston, M.D., of the University of Glasgow."

"And Mrs. Merchiston?"

"Was Barbara, only child of Thomas and Barbara Currie, late of Apedale in this county, who were drowned at sea in seventeen hundred and —"

"Stop, stop! you are like an animated tombstone reading itself aloud. The very stone — I have seen it in our own church-yard. And so she was born at Apedale? That accounts for their coming to settle here."

"Precisely. Anything more, Peg?"

"No, James;" for I was ashamed of my own doubts, as if that soft, mild face I caught a glimpse of under the veil, and the manly, benevolent head which I had watched the previous Sunday, did not prove, despite all gossip, that the Merchistons were "respectable," — even in *my* sense of the word, which was wider than that of my neighbours. "A respectable man" — as James once said when he was courting me, — "a respectable man is one who is always worthy of respect, because he always respects both himself and other people."

Perhaps it was to prove my own "respectability" in this sense, — and justly I might respect myself — namely, the happy woman who was James Rivers' wife, — that I dressed myself in my very best muslin gown of my own working, and my pretty green silk spencer and hat that my mother gave me

when I was married, preparatory to calling on Mrs. Merchiston.

At the Double House arose a puzzle. There were two front doors, and which should I knock at? After some doubt, I thought I could not do better than follow in my husband's steps, so I gave a summons at the door with the brass plate on it.

A man, half valet, half groom, answered.

"Is Mrs. Merchiston at home?"

"I don't know, ma'am; I will inquire, if you please. Will you be so kind as to knock at the other door?"

Upon which, with some abruptness, he shut this one, and left me outside.

"Well," thought I, "what can it signify which door I go in at? though 'tis rather odd, too."

However, I did as I was bidden, and was shown by a neat maid-servant into a very handsome parlour—drawing-room you would call it now, but drawing-rooms had not then reached Apedale.

By the appearance of a recently vacated sitting-room you can make a very good guess at its occupant. I soon decided that Mrs. Merchiston was young, inclined to elegant tastes, especially music, that she had no children, was left a good deal alone, and probably found herself in that dreariest position

for an active mind — that of a lady with nothing to do.

After a considerably long interval she appeared. Her welcome was courteous, even friendly, though not without a slight nervousness and hesitation.

It certainly had not been her toilette that kept me waiting, for she was in the simplest possible morning-gown of nankeen, and her hair would not have taken a minute's dressing, as it curled all round her head in natural, wavy curls like a child's. Very childlike, too, were both the figure and face; I could hardly believe that she must be, from the date of her parents' death on the tombstone, nearly, if not quite, thirty years old. She was not exactly pretty, but the expression of her blue eyes was very beautiful, perfectly simple, trusting, guileless, and gay; she was, in short, just the sort of woman that I should have expected a grave man like Dr. Merchiston to choose out from the world of much cleverer and lovelier women, and love deeply, perhaps even madly, to the end of his days.

I was quite satisfied, nay, charmed with her. When we parted, after a much longer chat than etiquette required, I invited her warmly to our house.

"I shall be happy to come in a friendly way,

but I believe Dr. Merchison does not wish for much visiting."

This was the first time the Doctor's name had entered into our conversation, so I politely inquired after his health, stating that I had seen him in church, and hoping I should soon have the pleasure of an introduction to him. I expected she would take the hint, send for her husband, and perform the desired introduction now.

But Mrs. Merchiston did nothing of the kind; she merely answered my inquiries as briefly as civility allowed, and evaded the subject.

Curiosity was too strong; I could not let it go.

"I hope sincerely that it is not on account of illness that Dr. Merchiston abstains from visiting. My husband thought he looked in rather weak health."

"Does he look so? In weak health? Oh no — oh no!"

All the while was indicated in that start — that flush — that paleness. Yet she had answered indifferently when I inquired after him; and in her conversation and the surroundings of this room there was no more trace of Dr. Merchiston than if he never entered there, or indeed no longer existed. Likewise in her form of speech I had noticed not the habitual happy "we" which most married people

learn to use, but the sad, involuntarily selfish "I" of spinsters and childless widows. It was incomprehensible.

I hastened to atone for my inadvertence. "Indeed, my dear Mrs. Merchiston, you need not be alarmed. It must be only his natural paleness, which strikes a stranger; while you who see him every day —"

"Oh, that is it — that is it," she hurriedly answered, and took me to the window to show me her flowers. Very soon after, I departed.

Some weeks passed; she returned my visit, and of course I paid a second. Several of our village wives and mothers called likewise. It was always the same story: they had been received with courtesy, were delighted with Mrs. Merchiston, but no one ever saw her husband. And when the fathers of families one after another paid their respects to the Doctor, they likewise returned well pleased, pronounced him a pleasant, good-hearted, gentlemanly fellow, but wondered that he never introduced them to his wife.

Two dinner-parties were made for the new-comers, and the invitations accepted; but ere the first, Mrs. Merchiston was "slightly indisposed;" and at the second, Dr. Merchiston was "unavoidably absent on

business." So that to both dinners each came alone; nevertheless, the impression they severally left behind was that of "exceedingly nice people."

At this time I did not go out much; and some weeks after, your mother, children, was born. She cost me a long illness, almost my life; but she throve well, and at last I recovered. Mrs. Merchiston was among my first visitors.

I was glad to see her, for she had been very kind. Many a basket of fruit and flowers had come from the Double House to ours. I thanked her as warmly as I felt.

"And your husband too — I do believe he has shot half the partridges in the county for my benefit — I have had so many; besides, it was he who rode twelve miles to fetch James that night they thought me dying."

"Was it?"

"Did you not know? Then do tell him, Mrs. Merchiston, how much I thank him for his goodness — for the comfort, the help he was to my poor James! Ah, *he* could understand what a husband feels when his wife is dying."

Mrs. Merchiston stooped over the new cradle with the little one asleep. She did not speak a word.

"But you will tell him," pursued I, earnest in

my gratitude. "What an excellent man he must be!"

"He is;" she answered, in a tone evidently steadied carefully down, even to coldness. "It is always a pleasure to him to do a kindness to any one. — May I look at the baby?"

She walked up and down the parlour, lulling it on her arms. It nestled its wee face into her bosom.

"No, I am not your mother, little one. Ah, no!"

She gave the child back to me and turned away. Her eyes were full of tears.

Then taking a chair by me, and softly stroking baby's fingers, she said, "Children, I believe, are a great responsibility and a heavy care; but I think it is a sadder thing still never to have had a child. There can be no love, no happiness, like a mother's; it often atones for the loss of all other love — all other happiness."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, at times. Because motherhood must for ever take away the selfishness of grief. How could a woman feel selfish or desolate — how could she indeed know any personal grief at all, if she had a child?"

"You are speaking less as a wife would feel than a widow. And you and I, Mrs. Merchiston, cannot, need not, dare not, talk as widows."

"God forbid," she said with a shiver.

I took an early opportunity of sending baby away, and talking of every-day things. I have great pity for a childless wife, unless, as rarely happens in this world, her marriage is so supremely happy that the brimming cup leaves not another drop to be desired. Yet even then its sweetness is apt to cloy, or become a sort of dual egotism, which feels no love, sympathises with no sorrow, and shares no joy, that is not strictly its own. Forgetting, perhaps, that perfect wedded union is not meant for the satisfaction of the two only, but also that from their oneness of bliss, they may radiate a wide light of goodness and blessedness out upon the world.

I rather wondered, knowing from report and from my own experience what good people the Merchistons were, that they did not both try more to live this life, which would certainly have made them happier than she, at least, appeared. Yet, as I said, I pitied her. No one can see the skeleton in his neighbour's house, or the worm in his friend's heart; yet we know, as our experience of life grows wider, that both must assuredly be there.

Mrs. Merchiston and I had a very pleasant chat; the baby had opened our hearts. We were growing better than acquaintance — friends. We planned social evenings for the ensuing winter, in which, when he came in, Mr. Rivers cordially joined.

“And I hope we shall see the Doctor too. — Madam,” continued he, breaking out into impressiveness, and discarding laconicism, “there isn’t a man alive I respect more than your husband.”

She coloured vividly, but merely observed, “You are right, — I thank you.”

We are all standing at our door, she being just about to take leave. Suddenly she drew back within. At that moment there passed close by — so close that he must have touched his wife’s dress — Dr. Merchiston.

He looked in, distinctly saw us all, and we him.

“Doctor — Doctor,” cried my husband.

In crossing the street, Dr. Merchiston turned, bowed in reply, but did not stop.

“Excuse me, I had something to say to him,” cried James, and was off, without a glance at Mrs. Merchiston.

But when I looked at her I was really alarmed. Her limbs were tottering, her countenance pale as death. I helped her back into the parlour, and

"You are speaking less as a wife would feel than a widow. And you and I, Mrs. Merchiston, cannot, need not, dare not, talk as widows."

"God forbid," she said with a shiver.

I took an early opportunity of sending baby away, and talking of every-day things. I have great pity for a childless wife, unless, as rarely happens in this world, her marriage is so supremely happy that the brimming cup leaves not another drop to be desired. Yet even then its sweetness is apt to cloy, or become a sort of dual egotism, which feels no love, sympathises with no sorrow, and shares no joy, that is not strictly its own. Forgetting, perhaps, that perfect wedded union is not meant for the satisfaction of the two only, but also that from their oneness of bliss, they may radiate a wide light of goodness and blessedness out upon the world.

I rather wondered, knowing from report and from my own experience what good people the Merchistons were, that they did not both try more to live this life, which would certainly have made them happier than she, at least, appeared. Yet, as I said, I pitied her. No one can see the skeleton in his neighbour's house, or the worm in his friend's heart; yet we know, as our experience of life grows wider, that both must assuredly be there.

Mrs. Merchiston and I had a very pleasant chat; the baby had opened our hearts. We were growing better than acquaintance — friends. We planned social evenings for the ensuing winter, in which, when he came in, Mr. Rivers cordially joined.

“And I hope we shall see the Doctor too. — Madam,” continued he, breaking out into impressiveness, and discarding laconicism, “there isn’t a man alive I respect more than your husband.”

She coloured vividly, but merely observed, “You are right, — I thank you.”

We are all standing at our door, she being just about to take leave. Suddenly she drew back within. At that moment there passed close by — so close that he must have touched his wife’s dress — Dr. Merchiston.

He looked in, distinctly saw us all, and we him.

“Doctor — Doctor,” cried my husband.

In crossing the street, Dr. Merchiston turned, bowed in reply, but did not stop.

“Excuse me, I had something to say to him,” cried James, and was off, without a glance at Mrs. Merchiston.

But when I looked at her I was really alarmed. Her limbs were tottering, her countenance pale as death. I helped her back into the parlour, and

made her lie down; but all my efforts could scarcely keep her from fainting. At length she said feebly —

“Thank you, I am better now. It is very wrong of me. But I could not help it. Oh, Mrs. Rivers,” — with a piteous, bewildered look, — “if you had been his wife, and had not seen him for two whole years!”

“Him! Is it possible you mean your husband?”

“Yes, my own husband — my dear husband; who loved me when he married me. God knows what I have done that he should not love me now! — O me! what have I been saying?”

“Never mind what you have been saying, my dear lady, I shall keep it all secret. There now, it will do you good to cry.”

And I cried too, heartily. It seemed very dreadful. That young, fond, pretty creature, to live under the same roof as her husband, and not to have seen him for two whole years. Here was explained the mystery of the double house — here was confirmation entire of those few straggling reports which, when I caught them flying abroad, I had utterly quenched, denied, and disbelieved. I was greatly shocked, and as was natural, I took the woman's side of the question.

"And I thought him so good, and you so happy! What deceivers men are!"

"You are mistaken, Mrs. Rivers, in one man at least," she returned, with dignity; "your husband spoke truly when he said there was no man living more worthy of respect than Dr. Merchiston."

"He has not lost yours, then?"

"In no point."

"And you love him still?"

"I do; God pity me — I do." She sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

There was then but one conclusion to be drawn — one only reason for a good man's thus mercilessly putting away his wife, — some error on her part, either known or imagined by him. But no, when I looked down on her gentle, innocent, childlike face, I rejected the doubt as impossible. Nor had I detected in her any of those inherent, incurable faults of temper or of character, the "continual dropping that weareth away the stone," which, if divorce be ever justifiable for any thing short of crime, would have justified it in some marriages I have seen.

"Does anybody know? Not that I mind, but it might harm him. Mrs. Rivers, do you think anybody at Apedale knows?"

"Alas, in a village like this, there can be no such thing as a secret."

She wrung her hands. "I thought so — I feared so. But he came to live in the country because the doctors said London air was killing me. I wish it had killed me — oh I wish it had!"

I have seen the look of despair in many a wronged, miserable wife's eyes, but I never saw it so mournfully plain as in those of poor Barbara Merchiston. I took her to my arms, though she was older than I, and asked her to let me comfort her and be her friend, if she had no other.

"Not one — not one. But" — and she started back with a sudden fear — "you will not be my friend by becoming an enemy to my husband?"

"I have no such intention. I condemn him not: to his own Master let him stand or fall."

Probably this was harshly spoken, for she took my hand, saying imploringly, "Pray do not misjudge either him or me. I was very wrong in betraying anything. But my life is so lonely. I am not strong; and this shock was too much for me. How ill he looked — how gray he has grown! Oh Evan, my poor husband!"

To see her weeping there, without the slightest anger or wounded pride, roused both feelings in me. I determined to fathom this mysterious affair; and,

braving the usual fate of those who interfere between man and wife, — namely, being hated by both parties, — to try and remedy it if I could.

“Tell me, my dear Mrs. Merchiston — believe me it is from no idle curiosity I ask, how long has this state of things lasted?”

“For five years.”

“Five years!” I was staggered. “Entire separation and estrangement for five years! And for no cause? Are you sure — oh forgive me if I wound you, — but are you sure there is no cause?”

“I declare before Heaven — none! He has never blamed me in word or deed.”

“Nor given you reason to blame him?” said I, with a sharp glance, still strongly inclining to the rights of my own sex.

“Me — blame him? — blame my husband?” she answered, with a look of half reproachful wonder. “I told you he loved me.”

“But love changes,” continued I, very cautiously, for it was hard to meet her large innocent eyes, like a gazelle’s with your hand on its throat. “Men sometimes come to love other women than their wives.”

She flushed indignantly all over her face. “You wrong him — you wickedly wrong him. His life is, and always has been, as spotless as my own.”

Well, thought I, I give it up. Either she is extraordinarily deceived, and the hypocrisy of that man is such as never was man's before, or the problem is quite beyond my solving. Yet — one more attempt.

“Just a word. Tell me, Mrs. Merchiston, how and when did this sad estrangement begin?”

“Six months after our marriage. We married for love; we were both alone in the world; we were all in all to one another. Gradually he grew melancholy, I could not find out why; he said it would pass away in time. Then he had a fever — I nursed him through it. When he recovered — he — sent me away.”

The brute! I thought. Just like a man! “But how?” I said aloud. “What reason did he give? What excuse could he offer?”

“None. He only wrote to me, when away on a short journey, and told me that this separation must be — that it was absolutely inevitable — that if I desired it he would leave me altogether — otherwise, it was his earnest wish we should still live under the same roof. But never, never meet.”

“And you never have met?”

“Very rarely, only by the merest chance. Then he would pass me by, never lifting his eyes. Once

— it was in the first few weeks of our separation — I met him on the staircase. I was different from what I am now, Mrs. Rivers; very proud, outraged, indignant. I flung past him, but he caught me in his arms. I would not speak; I stood upright in his clasp like stone. ‘We have been happy, Barbara.’ ‘But never can be again,’ I cried passionately. ‘No,’ he said; ‘I know that; — never again.’ He held me close, a moment or two, then broke from me. We have never met since.”

Such was her story, which the more I dived into it, became the more incomprehensible. No condemnatory evidence could be found against the husband; in all things Mrs. Merchiston’s comforts were studied, her wishes gratified. She said it often seemed as if an invisible watch were kept over her, to provide against her least desire. I could only counsel the poor wife to patience, hope, and trust in God.

She left me a little comforted. I asked her would she not stay? was she not afraid of meeting him in the street?

“Oh no,” she sighed, “he seems to know intuitively my goings out and my comings in. I never see him, never, not even by chance. I cannot guess how it happened to-day. How ill he looked!” she

added, recurring again to what seemed uppermost in her thoughts. "Mrs. Rivers, will you entreat your husband to watch over him — to take care of him? Promise me you will."

I promised her, poor tender thing, and inwardly determined to watch him myself with a closer eye than that of my simple-hearted husband, to whom, of course, I told the whole matter.

He, like me, was now fairly bewildered. "Peggy," he said, "hadn't you better let the thing alone?"

"Let it alone," I cried, "such cruel sorrow, such a flagrant wrong — Never."

"Well," kissing me, "perhaps you are right, Peg, my dear. Happy folk ought to help the miserable."

I set to work. Woman's wit is keen, and I had my share of the quality.

We invited Dr. Merchiston to our house; he came, at first rarely, then frequently. Of course Mrs. Merchiston was always included in these invitations, and of course we received duly the formal apology. Gradually this ceased, and he came still. He must have known that she came too, on other days: often he found books and work of hers lying about my table; yet his visits ceased not. He seemed to like to come. He and my husband became staunch

friends, but as for me, despite his courtesy, my heart remained angry and sore against him.

Yet I must confess that we found him all his wife fondly believed; a man of keen intellect, high principle, generous and tender heart. If I had not known what I did know, I should have avouched unhesitatingly that the world did not contain a nobler man than Dr. Merchiston. Excepting of course, my James.

For his manners, they were simple, natural, kind; not in any way eccentric, or indicative of vice or folly. Among our neighbours his character rose to the highest pitch of estimation; and when at last the fatal truth was known (alas! what household misery can ever long be hid, especially in a country place), all sorts of excuses and apologies were made for him.

And cruelly, mournfully — as it always falls on the weaker side — fell the lash of the world's tongue upon his wife.

But I — and one or two more who knew and loved her — stood boldly by Mrs. Merchiston through fair report and foul. And I believe so great was the mingled awe and respect which the Doctor impressed upon all his acquaintance, that no portion of these calumnies against her reached her husband.

Three months slipped by without change, save that Mrs. Merchiston's sad lot grew sadder still. Her few acquaintance dropped her; it was so "extremely inconvenient." One lady was on thorns whenever Mrs. Merchiston called, lest Dr. Merchiston should chance to call likewise; another tried every conceivable diplomacy to bring about their meeting; it would be "so very amusing." Gradually the unfortunate wife could not walk down our village without being pointed at, or crossed aside from, till she rarely went out at all.

Dr. Merchiston, too, was seldom seen, except by his immediate friends, none of whom dared breathe a word to him concerning his domestic affairs, save the simple inquiries of courtesy after Mrs. Merchiston, to which he invariably answered in the customary form, as any other husband would answer. I think, in fact I know, that all this time he believed her to be living at peace; perfectly happy in her beautiful house, in our cheerful village, and in a small society of her own choosing, of which I was the chief. He once hinted as much to me, expressing his great pleasure that Mrs. Merchiston and myself were fast friends.

I hardly know what possessed me that I did not then and there burst out upon him with a piece of my mind; any "woman of spirit" — as James some-

times called me — would have done it. What was he but a man?

Ay, there was the difficulty. His perfect manliness disarmed one; that quiet dignity of reserve, which, I have noticed, while women are ready enough to complain of their husbands, keeps nine men out of ten from ever saying a word against their wives. Then, too, the silent deprecation of his sickly mien, and of the ineffable, cureless melancholy which, the moment he ceased conversation, arose in his dark eyes. What could a tender-hearted woman do? Beginning by hating and despising, I often ended in pitying him, and every time I saw him all my determinations to attack him about his domestic wickedness vanished in air.

Besides — as James astutely observed — if a wife obstinately persists in blindly obeying her husband, never asking the why and the wherefore of his insane and incomprehensible will, and concealing from him that she is wasting away in slow misery, what business has a third party to accuse or even acquaint him of the fact?

Was no other plan to be tried? Yes; accidentally one was forced into my mind.

On a winter's afternoon, when I sat with my baby over our happy Christmas fire, Mrs. Merchiston came rushing in.

"Hide me — anywhere; let nobody find me. Mrs. Rivers, they hoot at me down the street. They say — oh, I dare not think what they say, and I dare not tell him. Perhaps — oh, horror — perhaps he thinks so too."

Long shudders possessed her; it was some time before she gained the slightest composure. It was not difficult for me to guess the cause of her anguish.

"Never mind wicked tongues, Mrs. Merchiston, they will cease if let alone. Only live in peace and patience. Hope in God still."

"I can't," she said, with a wild look that I had not before seen. "How should I hope in Him? He has forsaken me; why should I live any longer? Oh! save me, save me! Let me go away from here, from my husband. I must go, their cruel tongues will kill me."

"You shall," I cried, with a sudden idea, as suddenly converted into a resolution; "you shall, and I will help you."

Whereupon I explained all to her; somewhat hastily, for I was afraid of Mr. Rivers coming home; he who had just a man's notion of marital authority, and the wickedness of conjugal rebellion. But this was a case in which I set even him at defiance —

or rather I trusted to my own influence to convince him that, acting from my conscience solely, I acted right.

Mark me, children, I would have a woman submit to any lawful authority, even unjustly and cruelly exercised, so long as the misery does not ruin her soul. When the torment goads her thus far — when like Job's wife, the Devil tempts her to "curse God and die," then, I hold, all duty ceases, except to her Maker, and herself, the creature which He made; let her save her own soul, and flee!

My counsel to Mrs. Merchiston was this; at once — openly if she could, secretly if that was impossible — to leave her husband, absolutely and entirely, exacting no maintenance, making neither excuse nor accusation.

It necessarily followed that she must earn her own bread; and she must immediately seek a position that would place her fair fame above suspicion, both now and at any future time.

This is how I planned it.

I had a sister, a well-jointured widow, with a large family. I proposed to place my poor friend with her as a governess. Mrs. Merchiston eagerly assented. She had been a teacher, she said, in her youth, so that the duty would be easy, and she could fulfill it well.

"And oh!" she cried, while the tears ran down her face, "I shall be in a household, a home, among children. Perhaps the little things will love me."

Poor desolate soul!

I will not detail the many evening lectures that were required to bring my husband to my own way of thinking. For one thing he inexorably held out, and finally I agreed with him, that Dr. Merchiston should be openly and honourably informed of his wife's intended departure.

She wrote to him herself, in our house. James and I both read the letter. It was as follows:

"Dear Husband,

"Forgive my addressing you against your implied desire. Forgive my asking once more, and for the last time, what have I done to you? Why are you estranged from me? I can no longer sustain the life I lead. I desire to leave you. I am going to be a governess, as I was before we were married. Already all my plans are formed, but I could not part from you without this forewarning and farewell.

"Your wife,

"BARBARA."

This — the last and most carefully, even coldly worded, of the many letters she wrote and tore up — was left, to avoid remarks, by my own servant at Dr. Merchiston's door.

On the evening of that day Mrs. Merchiston came to my house. She looked white and shivering, but not with the cold. Her poor blue eyes so warm and kind, had a frosty glitter in them that was strange and sad.

"No answer," she kept repeating; "no answer — none. Now I *must* go."

I replied that everything was ready; our gig would be at the door in a minute; it was a bright moonlight night, and I myself would accompany her to my sister's house.

"It is not far — not so very far, Mrs. Rivers? Not so far but that I can always hear of him, or — if he should be ill at any time —"

"You can go home at once."

"Home!" she echoed piteously. Then, as if stung into one desperate effort, the last struggle of her tender and feeble nature, she sprang into the gig, I following her.

I was scarcely seated, reins in hand, for I was determined that no other than myself should have the credit of eloping with Mrs. Merchiston, than I felt on my right arm a grasp like a vice.

"Mrs. Rivers, whom have you there? Is it my wife?"

"Yes, Dr. Merchiston," I cried, not in the least

frightened by the look and tone; "yes, it is your wife. I am taking her where she will live in peace, and not be killed by inches any longer. Stand aside; let me drive on."

"In one moment. Pardon me;" he passed in front of the horse to the other side. "Barbara? Is that you, Barbara?"

No words could describe the ineffable tenderness, the longing anguish, of that voice. No wonder that it made her grasp my arm, and cry wildly on me to stop.

"It is not ten minutes since I received your letter. Barbara, grant me one word in the presence of this lady, by whose advice you are leaving your husband."

"By whose advice did you forsake your wife, Dr. Merchiston?" I began, boldly; but by the carriage-lamp I caught sight of his face, and it seemed like that of a man literally dying — dying of despair. "Mrs. Merchiston, suppose we re-enter my house for awhile. Doctor, will you lift your wife down? She has fainted."

Soon the poor lady was sitting in my parlour, I by her side. Dr. Merchiston stood opposite, watching us both. He was neither violent nor reproachful, but perfectly silent. Nevertheless, I felt some-

what uncomfortable, and glad from my heart that James was safe ten miles off, and that I alone had been mixed up with this affair.

"She is better now, Mrs. Rivers. I may speak?"

"Speak, sir."

"I will pass over my present trying position. Of course, I perceive — in fact, I was already aware — that Mrs. Merchiston has acquainted you with our sad, inevitable estrangement."

"Why inevitable? When there has been no quarrel on either side? When cruel as you have been to her, she has never breathed a word to your discredit?" (He groaned.) "When, as I understand, you have not the shadow of blame to urge against her?"

"Before heaven, none. Have I not declared this, and will I not declare it before all the world? She knows I will."

"Then why, my dear sir, in the name of all that is good and honourable — nay, even in the name of common sense, why is your estrangement inevitable?"

He seemed to cower and shudder as before some inexpressible dread; once he glanced wildly round the room, as if with the vague idea of escaping.

Finally, he forced himself to speak, with a smile that was most painful to witness.

"Mrs. Rivers, even though a lady asks me, I cannot answer that question."

"Can you if your wife herself asks it? I will leave you together."

As I rose to go, Dr. Merchiston interposed. The cold sweat stood on his brow; he looked — yes, I thought so at the moment — like a possessed man struggling with his inward demon.

"For God's sake, no! For the love of mercy, no! Stay by her; take care of her. I will speak in your presence; I will not detain you long."

"You had better not. See," for the poor wife was again insensible. Dr. Merchiston rushed to her side; he chafed her hands; he fell on his knees before her; but as she opened her eyes he crept away, and put the room's length between them.

"Now may I speak? You wished to leave me, Barbara. To go whither?"

I told him, concealing nothing; he seemed greatly shocked.

"Mrs. Rivers," he said at length, "such a scheme is impossible. I will never consent to it. If she desires, she shall leave my house, for yours or any

other. She shall have any luxuries she pleases; she shall be as free from me as if I were dead and she a widow. But that my wife should quit the shelter of my roof to earn her daily bread — I never will allow it."

From this decision there was no appeal. The wife evidently desired none; her eyes began to shine with joy, and even I took hope.

"But, Dr. Merchiston, can there be no change? You loved one another once. Love is not yet dead; love never wholly dies. Surely —"

"Madam, silence!"

Could it be his voice that spoke; his once calm, low voice? I was now really terrified.

He rose and walked about the room; we two sat trembling. At last he stopped in his old position, with his hand on the mantel-piece.

"Mrs. Rivers, my extremely painful position — you will acknowledge it is such — must excuse anything in me unbecoming, uncourteous."

I assured him he had my free pardon for any excitement, and I hoped he felt calmer now.

"Perfectly, perfectly; you must see that, do you not?"

"I do," said I, with a sense of bitterness against

the whole race of mankind, who can drive poor womankind almost out of their senses, while they themselves preserve the most sublime composure.

"I will now, with your permission and in your presence, speak to my wife. Barbara" — in a quiet equal tone, as if addressing an ordinary person — "I told you five years ago that it is not I who am inexorable, but fate, even if the life we then began to lead should last until my death. I repeat the same now. Yet, for these five years you have been at peace and safe. Safe," he repeated, with a slight pause, "under my roof, where I can shelter and protect you better than anywhere else."

"Protect her?" And then I told him — how could I help it? — of the slights and outrages to which their manner of life had exposed her. How every idle tongue in the neighbourhood had wagged at her expense, and to both their dishonour. It was terrible to see the effect produced on him.

"Hush; tell me no more, or — Barbara, forgive me; forgive me that I ever made you my wife. There is but one atonement; shall I make you *my widow!*"

"Doctor Merchiston," I cried, catching his arm, "are you mad?"

He started, shuddered, and in a moment had recovered all his self-control.

"Mrs. Rivers, this is a state of things most terrible, of which I was totally ignorant. How is it to be remedied? — Granting, as you *must* grant, the one unalterable necessity?"

I thought a minute, and then proposed to silence the tongue of all Apedale, that the husband and wife should openly walk to church together every Sunday, and kneel together in the house of God. And may He forgive me if in this scheme I had a deeper hope than I betrayed.

"I will do it," said Dr. Merchiston, after a pause. "Barbara, do you consent? Will you come home?"

"I will."

"But to the old life? In nothing changed — for changed it cannot, must not be?"

"Under any circumstances I will come home."

"Thank you; God bless you. It is better so."

There was a quiet pause, broken only by one or two faint sobs from her. At last they ceased. Dr. Merchiston took his hat to depart; as he was going, his wife started up and caught him by the hand.

"Husband, one word, and I can bear all things. Did — did you ever love me?"

"Love you? Oh, my little Barbara!"

"*Do you love me?*"

"Yes," in a whisper, sharp with intolerable pain;
"yes."

"Then I do not mind anything. Oh no, thank God! I do not mind."

She burst into hysterical laughter, and threw herself into my arms. It was only my arms she could come to — her husband was gone.

She went home as she had promised, and the old life began once more. Without the slightest change, she told me — save that regularly on Sunday mornings he knocked at the door of communication between the double house, kept always locked on her side, by his desire — that she found him waiting in the hall, and they walked arm-and-arm, as silently and sadly as mourners after a corpse, to the church door. In the same way returning, he immediately parted from her, and went his way to his own apartments.

Apedale was quite satisfied, and circulated innumerable explanations, which had probably as much truth in them as the former accusations.

Dr. Merchiston came as usual to play chess with my husband, and no allusion was ever made to the night which had witnessed so strange a scene in our house.

Mrs. Merchiston improved in health and cheerfulness. To a woman the simple conviction of being loved is support and strength through the most terrible ordeal. Once sure of that, her faith is infinite, her consolation complete. After his "Yes," poor little Barbara revived like a flower in the sun.

Not so her husband. Everybody noticed that Dr. Merchiston was wasting away to a shadow. On Sundays especially, his countenance, always sallow and worn, seemed to me to have the ghastly look of one whom you know to be inwardly fighting a great soul battle. You feel at once the warfare will be won — but the man will die.

And still, as ever, of all the impenetrable mysteries that life can weave, that man and his secret were the darkest.

At least to me. Whether it was so to my husband, whose reserved habits and wide experience of human nature helped to make him what, thank heaven, he always was — much wiser than I — I do not know; but I often caught his grave penetrating eye intently fixed on Dr. Merchiston. So much so, that more than once the Doctor recoiled from it uneasily. But Mr. Rivers redoubled his kindness; in truth, I never knew James, who was very un-

demonstrative, and usually engrossed between interest in his patients and his domestic affections, attach himself so strongly to any male friend out of his own home, as he did to Dr. Merchiston.

He seized every opportunity to allure our neighbour from his morbid, solitary in-doors life to a more wholesome existence. They rode out together on the medical rounds — James trying to interest him in the many, many opportunities of philanthropy with which a country surgeon's life abounds. Sometimes — one day I especially remember — Dr. Merchiston said he thought Mr. Rivers had familiarized him with every possible aspect of human pain.

“Not all — I have yet to show you — indeed, I thought of doing so this morning — the blackest aspect human suffering can show. And yet, like all suffering, a merciful God has not left it without means of alleviation.”

“What do you mean? I thought we were going to some hospital. For what disease?”

“No physical disease. Yet one which I believe, like all other diseases, is capable of prevention and cure — mental insanity.”

Dr. Merchiston grew as white as this my paper. He said, in a confused manner, which vainly tried

to simulate indifference, — “You are right. But it is a painful subject, — insanity.”

I did not wonder that my husband tried to change the conversation, and his morning plan likewise. It was evident that in some way the topic strongly affected our friend. Probably he had had a relative thus afflicted.

It must be remembered that forty years ago the subject of insanity was viewed in a very different light from what it is at present. Instead of a mere disease, a mental instead of a bodily ailment — yet no less susceptible of remedy — it was looked upon as a visitation, a curse, almost a crime. Any family who owned a member thus suffering, hid the secret as if it had been absolute guilt. “Mad-house,” “mad doctor,” were words which people shuddered at, or dared not utter. And no wonder! for in many instances they revealed abysses of ignorance, cruelty, and wickedness, horrible to contemplate. Since then more than one modern Howard has gone among those worse than prisons, cleared away incalculable evils, and made even such dark places of the earth to see a hopeful dawn.

Throughout his professional career, one of my husband's favourite “crotchets,” as I called them, had been the investigation of insanity.

Commencing with the simple doctrine, startling, but true, that every man and woman is mad on some one point — that is, has a certain weak corner of the mind or brain, which requires carefully watching like any other weak portion of the body, lest it should become the seat of rampant disease, he went on with a theory of possible cure — one that would take a wiser head than mine to explain, but which effectually removed the intolerable horror, misery, and hopelessness of that great cloud overhanging the civilised and intellectual portion of the world — mental insanity. I do not mean the raving madness which is generally super-induced by violent passions, and which bygone ages used to regard as a sort of demoniacal possession — which it may be, for aught I know — but that general state of unsoundness, unhealthiness of brain, which corresponds to unhealthiness of body, and like it, often requires less a physician than a sanitary commissioner.

This may seem an unnecessary didactic interpolation, but I owe it to the natural course of my story, and as a tribute to my dear husband. Besides, it formed the subject of a conversation which, the question being voluntarily revived by Dr. Merchiston, he and James held together during the whole afternoon.

It was good and pleasant to hear those two men talk. I listened, pleased as a woman who is contented to appreciate and enjoy that to which herself can never attain. And once more, for the thousandth time, I noted with admiration the wonderfully strong and lucid intellect with which Dr. Merchiston could grasp any subject, handle it, view it on all points, and make his auditors see it too. Even on this matter, which still seemed to touch his sympathies deeply, especially when he alluded to the world's horror and cruel treatment of insane persons — insane perhaps only on some particular point, while the rest of the brain was clear and sound — even there his powers of reasoning and argument never failed.

"Well," said Mr. Rivers, smiling, as they shook hands at the door, "I am glad to have found some one who can understand my hobby. You are certainly one of the clearest-headed men I ever knew."

"You truly think so? I thank you, Rivers," said the Doctor, earnestly, as he disappeared into the dark.

I remember this night's conversation vividly, because, in heaven's inscrutable mercy — ay, I *will* write "mercy" — it was the last time Dr. Merchiston entered our house.

The next morning he bowed to me at the window, riding past on his gaily curvetting horse, looking better and more cheerful than he had done for a long time.

That evening my husband was summoned to the Double House. Its master had been thrown from his horse, his leg and his right arm fractured. If all went well, James told me, and I had rarely seen him so moved — the patient would be confined to his bed, bound there hand and foot, helpless as a child, for three or four months. Poor Dr. Merchiston!

"Is his wife with him?" was the first question I asked.

"Yes, thank God, yes!" cried James, fairly bursting into tears. I was so shocked, so amazed by his emotion, that I never inquired or learnt to this day how it came about, or what strange scene my husband had that evening witnessed in the Double House.

There was a long crisis, in which the balance wavered between life and death. Life triumphed.

I went almost every day: but it was long before I saw Mrs. Merchiston; when I did, it was the strangest sight! Her looks were full of the deepest peace, the most seraphic joy. And yet she had been for weeks a nurse in that sick room. A close,

tender, indefatigable nurse, such as none but a wife can be; as fondly watchful — ay, and as gratefully and adoringly watched, my husband told me, by the sick man's dim eyes, as if she had been a wife bound for years in near, continual household bonds, instead of having lived totally estranged from him since the first six months of union.

But no one ever spoke or thought of that now.

Dr. Merchiston slowly improved; though he was still totally helpless, and his weakness remained that of a very infant.

In this state he was when I was first admitted to his sick-chamber.

Mrs. Merchiston sat at the window, sewing. The room was bright and pleasant; she had brought into it all those cheerfulnesses which can alleviate the long-to-be-endured suffering from which all danger is past. When I thought of the former aspect and atmosphere of the house, it did not seem in the least sad now; for Barbara's eyes had a permanent, mild, satisfied light; and her husband's, which were ever dwelling on her face and form, were full of the calmest, most entire happiness.

I sat with them a good while, and did not marvel

at his saying ere I left — “that he thoroughly enjoyed being ill.”

With what a solemn, sublime evenness is life meted out! Barbara has told me since that those five months following her husband's accident were the most truly happy her life had ever known.

“Look at him,” she whispered to me one evening when he lay by the window, half dozing, having been for the first time allowed a faint attempt at locomotion, though he was still obliged to be waited upon hand and foot — “Mrs. Rivers, did you ever see so beautiful a smile? Yet it is nothing compared to that he wore when he was very, very ill, when I first began to nurse and tend him; and he did nothing but watch me about the room, and call me his Barbara. — I am here, Evan! — did you want me?”

She was at his side in a moment, smoothing his pillow, leaning over and caressing him. I think he was not aware of there being any one in the room but their two selves, for he fondled her curls and her soft cheeks.

“My Barbara, we have had a little ray of comfort in our sad life. How happy we have been in this sick room!”

"We *have been*, Evan?"

"Ay; but nothing lasts in this world — nothing!"

"Husband, that is like one of your morbid sayings when we were first married. But I will not have it now — I will not, indeed." And she closed his mouth with a pretty petulance. He lifted his hand to remove hers, then sunk back.

"I am growing strong again; I can use my right arm. O Heaven! my right arm! I am not helpless any longer."

"No, thank God! But you speak as if you were shocked and terrified."

"I am — I am. With strength comes — O my Barbara!"

His wife, alarmed at the anguish of his tone, called out my name. Dr. Merchiston caught at it. "Is Mrs. Rivers there? Bid her come in; bid anybody come in. Ah! yes, that is well."

After a pause, which seemed more of mental than physical exhaustion, he became himself again for the rest of the evening.

The next day he sent for me, and, in Mrs. Merchiston's absence, talked with me a long while about

her. He feared her health would give way; he wished her to be more with me; he hoped I would impress upon her that it made him miserable to see her spending all her days and nights in his sick room.

“What! in the only place in the world where she has real happiness?”

“Do you think so? Is she never happy but with me? Then Heaven forgive me! Heaven have pity on me!” he groaned.

“Dr. Merchiston, you surely do not intend to send your wife from you again — your forgiving, loving wife?”

Before he could answer she came in. I went away thoroughly angry and miserable. That evening I indulged James with such a long harangue on the heartlessness of his sex, that, as I said, he must have been less a man than an angel to have borne it. When I told him the cause, he ceased all general arguments, sat a long time thoughtful, burning his hessians against the bars of the grate, finally sent me to bed, and did not himself follow until midnight.

Dr. Merchiston's cure progressed; in the same ratio his wife's cheerfulness declined. He grew day

by day more melancholy, irritable, and cold. By the time he was released from his helpless condition the icy barrier between them had risen up again. She made no complaint, but the facts were evident.

My husband and I by his express desire spent almost every evening at the Double House. Very painful and dreary evenings they were. Convalescence seemed to the poor patient no happiness — only a terror, misery, and pain.

One night, just as we were leaving, making an attempt at cheerfulness — for it was the first time he had performed the feat of walking, and his wife had helped him across the room with triumphant joy — he said, breaking from a long reverie, “Stay! a few minutes more; Rivers — Mrs. Rivers — I want to speak with you both.”

We sat down. He fell back in his chair, and covered his eyes. At length Mrs. Merchiston gently took the hands away.

“Evan, you don’t feel so strong as usual to-night.”

“I do; alas, alas, I do,” he muttered. “Would I were weak, and lay on that bed again as powerless as a child. No, Barbara; look, I am strong —

well." He stood up, stretching his gaunt right arm, and clenching the hand; then let it drop, affrighted. "My little Barbara, I must send thee away."

"Send me away?"

"Send her away?"

"Peggy," cried my husband, in stern reproof, "be silent!"

The poor wife broke out into bitter sobs. "Oh, Evan, what have I done to you? Dear Evan, let me stay — only till you are well, quite well."

For, despite what he said about his strength, his countenance, as he lay back, was almost that of a corpse. Barbara's clinging arms seemed to him worse than the gripe of a murderer.

"Take her away, Mrs. Rivers; take my poor wife away. *You* know how she has nursed me; *you* know whether I love her or not."

"Love her," I cried bitterly; but James's hand was upon my shoulder. His eye, which with its gentle firmness could, they said at the hospital, control the most refractory and soothe the most wretched patient, was fixed upon Dr. Merchiston. I saw the sick man yield; the bright hectic flush came and went in his cheek.

"Rivers, my good friend, what do you wish me to do?"

"A very simple thing. Tell me — not these poor, frightened women — but me, your real reason for acting thus."

"Impossible."

"Not quite. It may be I partly guess it already."

Dr. Merchiston started up with the look of a hunted wild beast in its last despair, but my husband laid his hand on his, in a kind but resolute way.

"Indeed, indeed, you are safe in telling me. Will you do it?"

The patient hesitated, held up his thin hand to the light with a wan smile, then said, "It cannot matter for long; I will tell you."

James immediately sent us both out of the room.

Mrs. Merchiston was a very weak woman, gentle and frail. She wept until her strength was gone; then I put her to bed in her maid's charge, and waited until Mr. Rivers ended his conference with her husband.

It was two hours before James came out. At

sight of him my torrent of curiosity was dried up; he looked as I had sometimes seen him, coming home from a death-bed. To my few questions he answered not a word.

"But at least," said I, half crying, "at least you might tell me what I am to do with poor Mrs. Merchiston."

"Yes, yes." He thought a minute. "She must go home with us; the sooner the better."

"You agree, then," I burst out, breathless; "you agree to this separation?"

"Entirely."

"You join with her wicked husband in his ingratitude — his brutality —"

"Peggy!" James caught me by the shoulders, with the sternest frown that ever fell on me in all our peaceful married life; "Peggy, may heaven forgive you! You do not know what you are saying."

I was completely awed.

"Dr. Merchiston has told you the secret, and you are determined to keep it?"

"Implicitly, while his poor life lasts."

"My husband was a man of inviolable honour. He never would tell a patient's secrets, or a friend's,

even to me, his wife; nor was I the woman to desire it. I urged no more.

During the ten days that Mrs. Merchiston remained in my house, part of the time she was in a sort of low fever, which was the happiest thing for her poor soul. I made not a single inquiry after her husband; I knew that Mr. Rivers was with him at all hours, as doctor, nurse, and friend.

One day, when Mrs. Merchiston was sitting in the parlour with me, he looked in at the door. She did not see him. He quietly beckoned me out.

"Well, James?"

"Speak lower, Peggy, lower; don't let her hear."

And then I saw how very much agitated he was; yet even that did not quite remove the bitterness with which I could not help mentioning the name of Dr. Merchiston.

"Peggy, Dr. Merchiston is dying."

I had not expected this; it was a great shock.

"I feared it would be so," continued James; "I have seen him sinking this long time. Now the mind is at peace, but the worn-out body —"

"His wife — his poor wife," was all I could utter.

"Yes, that is what I came to say. She must go to him; he wishes it much. Do you think she will?"

I smiled sadly. "Ah! James, she is a woman."

"And you women can forgive to all eternity, — Heaven bless you for it! Besides, she will know the whole truth soon."

I asked not what this "truth" was. What did it matter? he was dying.

"But are you sure, James, there is no hope of his recovery?"

"None, I believe — and am almost glad to believe it. There is no man I ever knew whom I so deeply pity, and shall so thankfully see gone to his last rest, as Dr. Merchiston."

These were strong words, enough to calm down every wrong feeling, and make me fit to lead the wife to her husband's sick — nay, death-chamber.

How we brought her thither I forget. I only remember the moment when we stood within the door.

Dr. Merchiston lay on his bed, as for five long months he had patiently and cheerfully lain. He had something of that old quiet look now, but with a change. The strange awful change which, however

fond friends may deceive themselves, is always clearly visible to a colder gaze. You say at once, "That man will die."

When Barbara came into the room, he stretched out his arms with the brightest, happiest smile. She clung to him closely and long. There was no forgiveness asked or bestowed; it was not needed.

"I am so content, my Barbara, content at last!" and he laid his head on her shoulder.

"Evan, you will not part from me again?"

"No — I need not now. They will tell you why it was. You believe — you will always believe, how I loved you?"

"Yes."

"Stoop. Let me hold her close as I used to do, — my wife, my little Barbara. Stoop down."

She obeyed. He put his arms round her, and kissed her with many kisses, such as he had not given her since she was a six months' bride; their memory remained sweet on her lips till she was old and grey.

Dr. Merchiston died at the next sunrise, died peacefully in Barbara's arms.

*

*

*

*

Three days after, my husband and I stood by the coffin, where for the last few minutes on earth the features which had been so familiar to us for the last two years were exposed to our view. James said, — touching the forehead, which was placid as a dead baby's, with all the wrinkles gone, —

“Thank the Lord!”

“Why?”

“For this blessed death, in which alone his sufferings could end. He was a monomaniac, and he knew it.”

Before speaking again, my husband reverently and tenderly closed the coffin, and led me downstairs.

The funeral over, and we two sitting quietly and solemnly by our own fireside, James told me the whole.

“He was, as I said, a monomaniac. Mad on one point only, the rest of his mind being clear and sound.”

“And that point was —”

“The desire to murder his wife. He told me,” pursued James, when my horror had a little subsided, “that it came upon him first in the very honeymoon — beginning with the sort of feeling

that I have heard several people say that they had at the climax of happiness — the wish there and then to die — together. Afterwards, day and night, whenever they were alone, the temptation used to haunt him. A physician himself, he knew that it was a monomania; but he also knew that, if he confessed it, he, sane on all other points, would be treated as a madman, and that his wife, the only creature he loved, would look on him with horror for ever. There was but one course to save himself and her; he took it, and never swerved from it."

"But in his illness?"

"Then, being perfectly helpless, he knew he could not harm her, and in great bodily weakness most monomanias usually subside. His left him entirely. When he grew stronger it returned. You know the rest. His life was one long torture. Peace be with him now."

"Amen," I said, and went to comfort the widow.

The terrible fact which Dr. Merchiston had desired should be told her after his death, did not seem to affect Barbara so much as we feared. Love to her, as to many other women, was the beginning and end of all things — sufficient for life, and even in death wholly undying.

"He loved me, he always loved me," she kept saying, and her days of mourning became the dawn of a perennial joy.

She lived to be nearly as old as I am now, remaining one of those widows who are "widows indeed," for ever faithful to one love and one memory.

THE END.



PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY

F. X. BEER

kgl. Hofbuchbinder

in
MÜNCHEN

Lederergasse N° 25.

F. X. BEER

kgl. Hofbuchbinder

MÜNCHEN

Lederergasse N° 25.



Craik, Dinah Maria Mulock,

Bread upon the waters

Leipzig 1865

P.o.angl. 249 t-15

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10747876-7